DIURNAL EVENTS;

OR THE

Antipodes to Romance.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE SAILOR AND SOLDIER BOY.

Hail, Social Life! into thy pleasing bounds
Again I come, to pay the common stock
My share of service, and, in glad return,
To taste thy comforts, thy protected joys. THOMSON.

VOL. II.

London:
Printed at the Minerva Press for
A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.
1816.

DIURNAL EVENTS.

A NOVEL.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL. *

DIURNAL EVENTS.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL Clarenville entered the drawing-room of lady Neville, where she and her guests were sitting, on the evening of the same day; and throwing himself on a sofa, shaded his face with his hand, and remained for some minutes silent.

"I must go once more to-night to Rosebrook," said her ladyship, rising to leave the room; "for I cannot rest till I know how my poor friend is, after hearing such an indifferent account of him when I was there in the morning."

"There is no necessity for your going on that account, my dear sister," said the general, "as I can inform you our good friend is wonderfully better, having just come from the parsonage myself."

"I am delighted to hear it," returned Mrs. Clarenville; "for my fears were, I confess, stronger than my hopes.—But what a sudden amendment, at least according to the relation lady Neville brought us in the morning! is not doctor Morton surprised at it?"

"He said, immediately he saw his patient, some powerful emotion of the mind had produced it, and that it was fortunate it had taken so favourable a turn."

"And what was the cause, my love?" inquired Mrs. Clarenville.

"The assurance Elinor has given him that she will shortly become the wife of Mortimer."

"Of Mortimer!" repeated Emma; "oh, how much too good she is for him!"

"My

"My dear Emma," said her mother, "how much too severe you are upon poor Mortimer!"

"No; she is perfectly right," returned the general, as he rose from his seat, and rapidly paced the room; "Elinor deserved a far superior mind; dear, sweet girl! how sincerely I pity her! Depend upon it, the melancholy circumstances attendant on her return home had so highly wrought up her feelings, she imagined her happiness would be insured by compliance with her apparently-dying father's most favourite wish; but when the enthusiasm of the moment is past, she will find her mistake, for she does not, she never can feel that affection for him her heart would have been capable of for another who only could deserve her. I mean not any injurious reflections against major Mortimer; no, I acknowledge his character to be as excellent as his disposition; but my darling Elinor requires a more superior mind.

mind. I had wished—nay, fervently hoped, her choice would have fallen on a far different object; it would, it must have done so, but for this unfortunate attachment of Mortimer's to her; and I greatly fear she has wrecked her own happiness to promote that of her father: but will she find this filial sacrifice succeed in securing her parent's felicity? oh! no; Mr. Belvington cannot fail in time to discover how she has thrown this treasure away, and Elinor herself will never be happy."

"You see things in too gloomy a light, I hope," returned his wife; "even if Mortimer is not all you can wish, I am certain Elinor's mind is so well trained, she will chalk out for herself a plan of happiness; and she cannot, I think, be very miserable with a man so much attached to her as Mortimer has proved himself to be. I really believe we shall scarcely find a similar instance of a young man, an universally-admired one

also, remaining constant to a female when separated from her by so many leagues; frequently thrown into the society of other women, and yet retaining so strong a regard for one who had even refused him before he left England."

"How do we know," asked the general, half-smiling, "if this attachment has proved so very steady? might it not only revive again at sight of the English shore?"

"I could never have believed you would have harboured such a supposition," said Mrs. Clarenville, in a tone of surprise, "if I had not heard it myself."

"If my brother," said lady Neville, "has the same cause for feeling angry at this sudden arrangement I have, I am not much surprised at his expressing sentiments so unlike his usual liberal mode of thinking. To own the truth, it has completely disconcerted a favourite plan of mine, which was the hope of seeing an attachment formed between

Elinor and my nephew, for they are indeed kindred minds."

"I had not only hoped so," returned the general, "but firmly believed such would have been the case, and I own I am grievously disappointed."

"Setting aside this our favourite project," said her ladyship, "what additional comfort will Mr. Belvington derive from this union? He cannot expect to keep his child with him; Mortimer will not hear of leaving the army, and Elinor is not the character for a soldier's wife; Caroline would make a far better."

"Mortimer has thrown dust into the eyes of the whole family, I think," said the general, "for there is but one voice throughout."

"You may except Caroline's, I believe," returned lady Neville, laughing, "for I much suspect he is no favourite of hers."

The

The door now opened to admit sir Edward, and Clarenville himself, to the great surprise of the whole party, who had not the slightest expectation of seeing either.

"Why, how is this, Ormsby?" said the general, after the mutual salutations had passed; "have you, by a magic stroke of your godmother the fairy's wand, written, signed, and sealed your lawyer's packet?"

"Would that my godmamma had been so gifted!" he returned. "No, those dilatory mortals are more than usually so, I believe; therefore finding they were determined on trying my stock of patience some time longer, I thought it was much more likely to continue in my possession if I gallopped down into Hampshire for a day or two, as I found neither whip nor spur would be effectual in making those animals gallop, whom nature had designed should never do

otherwise than creep; and besides, I thought you would be gratified at finding I had ferretted out this dormouse," pointing to Clarenville, "and making him also take a run down; but now he is come, pray make the most of him, as he, like myself, must be off again the day after to-morrow."

"Why in such haste, Alfred?" inquired lady Neville.

"My dear aunt, you must excuse my rudeness in thus absenting myself from your society; but I must of necessity take a trip into Devonshire, as I would not have my good uncle's bequest neglected; and his old tenants would be terribly so, if I did not make a point of going myself to settle an unfortunate quarrel that has broke out amongst them."

"I can urge you no further then," returned her ladyship, as the tears rose to her eyes at the remembrance of her lost husband; "but I hope this dispute will

will not prevent your returning to us shortly; Emma will not thank your good folk if it does."

"Sir Edward," said the now-blushing Emma, wishing to draw her aunt's attention from that topic, "you can have no idea of the news I am going to relate to you. Would you believe it? Elinor has really and truly engaged herself to major Mortimer; now what do you think of her choice?"

"I will answer you," returned sir Edward, smiling, "in the words of your father's favourite old song, 'As men should serve a cucumber, she throws herself away.'"

"I knew I should find you of my opinion," cried Emma; "nothing ever grieved me so much as this engagement, which I am sure cannot prove a happy one."

"I cannot conceive," said Mrs. Clarenville, "why you should all be so inveterate against major Mortimer. What

reasonable fears can you entertain for our dear Elinor's happiness with one who is not only, as I am convinced is the case, the object of her choice, but is himself so excellent a creature, and withal so well-principled a being, that she cannot fail of finding him every thing her heart can wish?"

"My dear mother," answered Emma, "you are yourself so good, that you cannot, you will not see imperfection in another, even when it was most glaring; I never could persuade you to remark Mrs. Montague's slighting manner towards Elinor, when in company with her more fashionable friends; you would scarcely believe the anecdote I told you of her allowing the countess of Wallingforth to continue in her mistake relative to the country cousin, though it was no difficult task to prevail on you to say how sweetly the dear girl behaved in return. In no one instance, and frequent were her trials, did she allow the pointed neglect,

glect or the contemptuous manner of her ladyship that evening a moment to ruffle her temper, but conducted herself with such a calm dignity towards both these insolent women as at length even to awe them into better behaviour."

"Insolent is a strong expression, Emma," said her mother.

"It is a just one," cried Clarenville, now for the first time breaking silence, while his eyes flashed indignant fire; "I never was in company with so odious a woman as Mrs. Montague."

"Well—but, Alfred," said lady Neville, "you have not yet given us your opinion of our young friend's choice."

Clarenville hesitated a moment; his colour rapidly varied; at length, rising and walking to a window as he spoke, answered, "Time and major Mortimer can alone determine whether it will prove a happy one."

"Wisely observed, Alfred," said sir Edward, dryly; "Solomon himself could

not have answered more to the purpose."

"Well, I shall see Elinor myself to-morrow," said Emma, "and shall then be able to determine by her looks whether she is happy or not."

"As I am also an excellent physiognomist," returned sir Edward, "you must permit me to accompany you; and now let us, before the evening gets too damp for you, take a little stroll; your brother will entertain those within doors with London news."

The party now broke up; Clarenville accompanied his aunt on a visit of charity, while the general, taking up a book, read aloud to his wife till the pedestrians returned from their excursion.

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, having heard a good account of Mr. Belvington, lady Neville accompanied her guests to the parsonage of Rosebrook.

Mrs. Willoughby and Caroline were

in the parlour when they arrived. The latter did not appear in her usual spirits; and taking up her work, scarcely joined in the conversation, but sat apparently deep in thought.

At length the voice of Elinor was heard in the hall speaking to a servant; Caroline now raised her eyes; they fell upon the countenance of Clarenville, who immediately taking up a music-book, employed himself in rapidly turning over the leaves. Elinor had, however, passed the door without entering; and Emma finding she was not coming in, said, "I scarcely ever heard so sweet a voice as Elinor's is."

"Yes," replied Caroline, "it generally, I observe, causes a *sensation*, as the fashionable phrase is, when first heard."

"I do not wonder at it," remarked the general, "the tones are so sweetly modulated; when animated, how heart-inspiring! how penetrating! and when

agitated,

agitated, how soft, how touching, are her melodious accents!"

The leaves of the music-book were now also more than usually agitated, when Caroline, after a few moments' pause, exclaimed—"Then they are very different to major Mortimer's; his are like those of an old hum-drum bagpipe."

"Caroline!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, turning hastily towards her sister, "do you recollect whom you are speaking of? What would my father say, were he to know of the liberty you are allowing yourself?"

"Oh," she returned, "I know very well my head would have to answer for such a speech in his hearing; it would raise almost as great a storm as if I were to say, 'My dear sir, though I am conscious Mortimer fancies himself deeply in love with Elinor, yet, I assure you, she does not care a fig for him in return."

"Good Heaven, Caroline!" exclaimed her

her sister, "for pity's sake do not run on in this wild manner; I must indeed leave the room if you do."

"There is no necessity for your doing so, my dear sister," returned Caroline, throwing aside her work; "I am now going to my father, and will send Elinor down."

But as she approached the door, it was opened by the person she was speaking of, who, with her mother, now entered. "Your sister Coleridge is with your father," said Mrs. Belvington to her youngest daughter, "therefore you had better remain below."

Emma, delighted to meet her friend again, had flown eagerly towards her; and in the anxious inquiries she continued making, Elinor found time to recover from the confusion the sudden appearance of Clarenville, after his last farewell, had created.

The first glance of Elinor's countenance convinced general Clarenville all

was

was not right within. Mrs. Clarenville observed the smile with which she welcomed her friends, and hoped her husband had been mistaken in the judgment he had formed; lady Neville not having studied Elinor's mind so attentively as her brother had done, could form no positive opinion; but sir Edward and Caroline appeared to think the same.

Clarenville, after the first bow had passed, resumed his employment, and the conversation turned for some time upon Mr. Belvington's illness. Lady Neville finding him so much recovered, entreated permission for Elinor to return to Willowfield, as they should soon lose their beaux again.

"I fear," said Mrs. Belvington, smiling, "you must not ask for her at present; she is head-nurse, and her company now is much in request."

"We must not wish to rob Mr. Belvington of such an excellent nurse as we

know

know our dear child to be," replied the general, affectionately smiling on Elinor; "she has promised to come to us when we shall most need her society; therefore do not let us be selfish enough to think of taking her at present from her father."

"You do not yet know the extent of my selfishness," returned lady Neville; "I want Elinor even more for my own sake than for my friends. She has a talent I just now particularly wish to call into requisition. That elegant plant," she continued, addressing Elinor, "you so much admired in the green-house the other day, is now in full bloom; and the flowers are so extremely beautiful that your pencil alone can do justice to them; and as it blows so very rarely, I am very anxious to have a drawing of them, to produce to any visitor that may admire my plant."

"What a sly girl you are, Elinor!" exclaimed Emma; "not a word did you

you ever hint of knowing any thing of the art, though you have so frequently seen me employed in that manner."

"Never in drawing flowers," returned Elinor, endeavouring to laugh off the charge, "and I never dared bring that branch in competition with your more noble one."

"What can be more beautiful than flowers?" said lady Neville; "no, Elinor, if you think proper to lower your own excellence in the art, it shall not be, I assure you, at the expence of my favourite amusement."

"Will you not gratify us with the sight of some of your performances?" inquired sir Edward.

"Oh, yes, that she will," cried Caroline, springing towards the door; "I will bring her portfolio down, as I know where it is."

"Stop, Caroline," cried Elinor, hastily starting from her seat; "I will go for it myself."

"No,"

"No," said the general, detaining her, "do not leave us; we shall not enjoy your society long, and your sister will willingly oblige us."

Caroline quickly returned with her burthen; Elinor, immediately hastening to her, took the portfolio from her hand, and opening it, threw some of the drawings it contained on the table, which were soon seized on and admired.

General Clarenville taking one up, called her to inform him what the name of the plant was; Elinor was hastening round the table to look at it, when the door opened and Mortimer entered.

Aware that her engagement with him was already known to her friends, Elinor's colour heightened as he advanced towards the party, who all separately shook hands with him, Emma and her brother only excepted.

"Bring Elinor's portfolio this way," said Emma in a low voice to Caroline; "I want to see what else it contains, and she

she has hitherto held it so tight, it has been impossible to get a peep into it."

Caroline dexterously slipped it from the now-unconscious grasp of her sister, and returned in triumph with it to Emma, who, calling sir Edward to join them, busied herself in shewing and admiring the exquisite imitations of nature it contained.

"Here is something very curious," said Caroline to her companions in a whisper, "you may depend upon it; see how carefully it is wafered up."

"Then we ought not to pry into the secret," returned Emma, endeavouring to restrain her from opening it.

"Oh, but we will though," she laughingly replied; "for see, I have not broken one of the seals, and yet I have contrived to slip off the enclosure. Well," she continued, after viewing the painting a moment in silence, "this excels any thing of Elinor's I ever saw," putting it into Emma's hand as she spoke, whose curiosity

sity overcoming her good resolutions, made her turn to the subject, which she immediately perceived to be a beautiful *double-flowered white water-lily.*

Both sir Edward and herself exclaimed at once, "What an exquisite painting!"

Clarenville, who had been slowly advancing to them, now quickened his steps, and caught a glimpse of that well-remembered flower, at the same moment that Elinor also, roused by this exclamation, cast her eyes on the paper in the hands of Emma. General Clarenville, whose attention had likewise been drawn towards the party, saw, for the first time, Elinor's eyes dart an angry glance at her sister, who, laughing, said—"Forgive me, Elinor; I knew not you had left any thing so precious in this portfolio, which I have so often amused myself with looking over; and really the treasure I have discovered is so very beautiful, it is im-

possible

possible for me to feel sorry at having dragged it forth to light."

Mortimer now taking the drawing from her, exclaimed—"Oh, give this to me, Elinor, it is so very beautifully done!"

"Indeed I cannot," cried Elinor, as she hastily took the drawing into her own hands; and a deep blush instantly suffusing her cheek, she added—"It is intended for lady Neville; I drew it purposely for her, as I recollected, when it was procured for me, having heard her ladyship express a wish to see the flower, as she had been unsuccessful in her endeavour to purchase some for the lake at Willowfield."

"You could not have made me a more acceptable present," said lady Neville, after having admired and expressed her sincere thanks for the drawing; "it was very kind of you to remember an old woman when so much more pleasantly engaged."

"Elinor's

"Elinor's memory is always so retentive," said Caroline, archly, "she never forgets any attention she has received."

"I think," said Mrs. Belvington to lady Neville, "we must spare Elinor to you for this day, as to-morrow may be too late. Will you go with me to the invalid's chamber? the pleasure of seeing you will perhaps induce him to consent to part with his nurse for a few hours."

Lady Neville instantly followed her friend from the room, and soon obtained the desired permission.

"I must not allow this day to pass," said Elinor to her mother when she returned, "without seeing Eliza. What will she think of me when she finds I am gadding out to dinner, and have not been near her this week past?"

"I will walk round by Edgewold with you, my love," said the general, "whilst these good folk return to Willowfield."

"My dear sir," cried Emma, "you are always trying to steal Elinor from

us;

us; but this time I am determined to be also of your party."

"You shall not walk so far this hot morning, Emma, I assure you," cried sir Edward, eagerly; "nay, do not think of it," he continued, seeing her sportively preparing to disobey him; "I entreat you will not."

"Now you speak so prettily," returned Emma, laughing, "I will not act contrary to your wish."

"If you are inclined to go," said Mrs. Belvington, "Elinor shall drive you in her donkey-cart; sir Edward will not, I think, object to that."

Ormsby declared the scheme had his full approbation, and the general offered himself as companion to his wife and sister, since Mrs. Belvington had refused to trust her daughter with him.

Clarenville, unwilling to join the party that remained, yet still more so to leave them, lingered at the garden-gate till the little vehicle appeared; he then suddenly

recollected those animals were apt to prove vicious, and some accident might happen, which, if he were by, would perhaps be in his power to prevent. Accordingly he quitted not his station till he had placed the reins in Elinor's hand, and they then proceeded to Edgewold.

CHAPTER II.

No accident *did happen* to alarm Clarenville's fears, and the party arrived in safety at the rectory. Elinor's friend was at home, and delighted to see her. After making many inquiries relative to Mr. Belvington, turning to her brother, she said, "Basil, I know the colonel wants to speak with you; he is in the garden with his little girl. Had you not better go to him? but tell him to send Elinor in to me."

"Deliver your orders yourself, my

dear sister," returned Mortimer, as the colonel entered with his babe. Elinor took it from his arms, and called to Emma, to shew her the likeness she had discovered to its father. Emma, however, declared she could see none, though she acknowledged it was a most beautiful infant.

"You have named it after our dear Elinor, I find," she continued, addressing Mrs. Wardley.

"Yes," returned the colonel, "and after our dear brother there," pointing to the major. "My wife has tacked two most incongruous names together; she has christened the poor child Elinor Mortimer."

Emma could not forbear smiling at the heightened colour the mention of these names brought to the cheek of the individuals who owned them: had she looked around, she would have discovered a third not less vivid; but though it escaped her observation, the penetrating

eye

eye of her lover had caught and traced it to its source.

Mortimer, now recovering himself, inquired of his brother-in-law if he had any commands for him?

"Yes, *major*," returned the colonel, "I have some particular business with you."

Mortimer started and exclaimed, "*Major!* then I know my doom; my commanding officer is about to dispatch me to my regiment!"

"You are not likely to prove mutinous, I hope," returned the colonel, laughing; "I am not going to banish you for more than a fortnight; but that time you must be absent."

They now left the room together, and Mrs. Wardley, half smiling, said, "I am very sorry for poor Basil; but upon military business I never dare interfere."

Elinor likewise endeavoured to feel very sorry, but could not avoid thinking it doubtful whether her sorrow was sin-

 cere.

cere. Clarenville now spoke to Mrs. Wardley of her little girl, whilst Elinor took up her friend's netting, which she earnestly employed herself with.

"I see, Elinor, you are as fond of that work as ever," said Mrs. Wardley; "do you know, the colonel has still that purse you knitted him before he left England; but he wants another terribly; you must set to work again, for the one I am doing for him will not be finished this twelve-month. Have you done any thing in that way lately?"

"Not very lately," said Elinor, endeavouring to speak in an unconcerned tone, as the purse and the race recurred to her recollection.

"Mortimer now again entered with his brother, and soon after, Emma proposed their departure, that her friend might have a long day before her to complete her task in.

"Miss Belvington," cried sir Edward, after assisting Emma into the cart, "you

cannot imagine how tired I feel; recollect I was only off my journey last night."

"You cannot wish me to walk to Willowfield *on so warm a day*," replied Elinor, smiling.

"No, *I* do not," returned sir Edward; "but it is very plain major Mortimer does; therefore, if you will not oblige him, I will."

Elinor, now too completely embarrassed to make any further objection, took the offered arm of Mortimer, and slowly and silently followed the vehicle, which sir Edward managed to set off in a dashing style, and the turning in the lane soon concealed them from her sight.

Poor Clarenville now felt himself in a very uncomfortable situation. The continued silence of his companions he attributed to their finding themselves encumbered with a third person, and every passing moment increased the awkwardness he felt. In this silent mood, which

Elinor would have given worlds to have broken, though unable to summon sufficient courage, they proceeded till they were far advanced on a wide heath, which divided Edgewold from the village of Willowfield. The silence was now violently interrupted by a loud peal of thunder; the gathering clouds had till this moment passed unnoticed, so totally had they all been engrossed by their separate reflections. A consultation now ensued, whether it would be better to turn back, or make the best of the way they were proceeding in? Mortimer advised the latter plan, as he assured them there was a cottage at the end of the heath, where they could procure shelter. Large drops of rain now beginning to fall, Clarenville ventured to request Elidor to accept his arm also, as she might be enabled by his additional assistance to proceed at a quicker rate. Scarcely had she complied with his request, when the rain began to fall more violently, and the gentlemen

gentlemen endeavoured, by quickening their pace, which at last they fairly lengthened into running, to reach a place of shelter for Elinor before the storm approached nearer. A few moments, however, proved their exertions would be of no avail, as the rain now fell in torrents, and the lightning each moment became more vivid. They now slackened their pace, unwilling to fatigue their fair companion unnecessarily. Elinor, naturally courageous, bore the loud roar of the thunder which accompanied the blue and forked flashes without betraying any alarm, till the sudden falling of a fire-ball, not many yards distant from her, and the loud and bursting peal, which seemed to break immediately over her head, put all her fortitude to flight; yet a violent start alone betrayed her alarm, as the power of expressing what she felt was, for a moment, totally taken from her.

Clarenville now almost involuntarily threw his arm around her, but a faint exclamation escaping her, he drew it back, fearing he had offended her; but again almost immediately extended it, as he saw her, deprived of his support, nearly sinking to the ground, Mortimer having the moment before withdrawn his arm to mount the bank by the side of the road, in order to discover if the cottage were in sight. Having discerned the object he was looking for, though at some distance, he returned to inform his companions of it; but upon observing Elinor pale, and nearly fainting, supported by Clarenville, his terror and apprehension exceeded all bounds; and he was so vehement in his entreaties to know the cause, that Elinor, ashamed of the alarm she had called forth, exerted herself to say she had unfortunately wrung her ancle in the start she had given when terrified by the lightning; and

now

now overpowered by pain and fatigue, entreated him to place her on the bank till sufficiently recovered to proceed.

After resting there a few moments, she made an effort to continue her walk, but, unable to put her foot to the ground, again sank upon the earth.

Mortimer, now in agonies for her health, the bank being completely soaked with the rain, entreated Clarenville to hasten forwards to the cottage, and procure a chair in which they could remove her; but then recollecting he was unacquainted with the way thither, he desired him to remain with Elinor whilst he ran on for assistance, and without waiting another moment, flew off on his errand.

The storm had entirely spent itself in the last terrible explosion, the rain had ceased to fall, and the sun now broke out again in all its splendour. Elinor, still sick with pain and agitation, endeavoured to support herself on her arm, when Clarenville, seating himself beside

her, in a low voice said, "Will Miss Belvington condescend to think it is a brother who now entreats her to honour him thus;" and as he spoke, he gently drew her agitated form towards him, and continued to support her, without again interrupting the silence, till he saw Mortimer returning with sir Edward, who had stopped at the cottage, having observed the threatening appearance of the heavens, and bearing between them a chair, in which Elinor was placed, till the carriage, which had been sent for sometime before by sir Edward, arrived.

Elinor, flushed with pain, felt not the damp, which had penetrated through her clothes, till she was seated with Mortimer in it. A sudden chillness then first alarmed her; but hoping it would go off when she was able to change her wet garments, she spoke not of it, either to him or Emma, whom she found at the cottage, under great alarm for the consequences of the accident. Mortimer hav-

ing

ing given up his place to her, Elinor endeavoured to persuade her friend it was nothing very material, and she trusted a little rest would soon relieve her; but lady Neville, on their arrival at the house, sentenced Elinor to bed, and in a few hours was so much alarmed by a rapid accession of fever, that she dispatched an express for doctor Morton, who found his patient on his arrival most alarmingly ill: her spirits had, preceding the accident, and for some time past, been under considerable agitation, which, with the pain and cold she had suffered from that morning, soon made her illness assume a very serious appearance; and lady Neville, fearful of alarming Mr. Belvington by sending to Rosebrook for either Caroline or her mother, proposed dispatching a servant to Beechbrook, and requesting Mrs. Willoughby to come to her sister as soon as possible.

Clarenville desired to be the bearer of this message, confident he could reach

Beechbrook in half the time the servant would take. Sir Edward was too much alarmed to allow of his remarking this was not the first instance of Clarenville's running a race on Elinor's account, though he felt surprised Mortimer should allow him to go, whilst he himself remained inactive.

Before Mrs. Willoughby arrived, Elinor's senses had begun to wander; she knew not her sister when she entered, and who now entreated lady Neville to persuade Mrs. Clarenville and Emma to leave the room, as she did not wish her sister's incoherent expressions to be heard by them. Her ladyship had much difficulty in inducing these attached friends of Elinor to comply with this request, till she assured them it was essentially necessary the invalid's room should be kept as quiet as possible: she then herself delicately retired to the dressing-room, aware, from what she had overheard, it would prove extremely distress-

ing

ing to the now-unconscious sufferer, if she recovered, to find any one, except her sister, had been witness to the wanderings of her delirium.

General Clarenville remained almost stationary at the door of the dressing-room, whilst Mortimer paced the drawing-room for hours; one moment exclaiming he was the most miserable man in existence, then accusing sir Edward of not entering into his feelings, now declaring he should never survive the loss of his beloved Elinor; and when sir Edward attempted to reason with him, vehemently asserted he never could have loved, or he would not talk in such an apathetic manner; then, upon his companion remaining silent, he would exclaim, "I know you think her dying, but she must not—she shall not die!"

Sir Edward, at length completely wearied by his ineffectual attempts at consolation, left the room to seek his Emma, whom he found, though in great afflic-

tion

tion for her friend, more willing to accept his efforts in the office of comforter.

But Mortimer, now left with no one to complain to, soon found solitude insupportable; and leaving the parlour, began rapidly to ascend the stairs leading to Elinor's apartment, and after listening a few moments at her door, as rapidly descended, but with so heavy a step as to draw lady Neville from the dressing-room, to entreat he would give over this employment, which she was fearful would disturb the invalid, who now appeared to be falling into a slumber.

Mortimer, angry at her remonstrances, turned hastily from her, and again entering the parlour, closed the door, and began to pace it in the same manner as before.

Doctor Morton remained at Willowfield till a late hour in the evening, and before his departure was enabled to inform the anxious inhabitants there, his patient's fever was abated; and as she

was

was now in a profound sleep, he trusted all fears for her life were happily removed.

After he was gone, sir Edward, attended by Emma, once more ventured back to Mortimer, with whom they now found Clarenville, who had never been either seen or heard of since his return from Beechbrook with Mrs. Willoughby.

Mortimer now advanced to Ormsby, and entreated his forgiveness for the rudeness of his manner towards him. The latter assured him he had it most freely, and Mortimer continued, "My dear sir Edward, you know how to pity me, for you can pretty well imagine what my feelings must have been whilst under the apprehension of losing so beloved an object; but there is an insensible fellow," pointing to Clarenville, now leaning against the chimneypiece, and employed in disarranging all the flowers the vases contained, "who, for the last half-hour, has been a quiet listener to all my

expressions of alarm without interposing one word of comfort."

Clarenville's before-pale countenance now flushed a crimson hue, though he bore in continued silence this violent accusation; and Emma, as she heard Mortimer's vehement tones, mentally said, "If Caroline were present, she would now be obliged to acknowledge Mortimer's tones can vary when he sincerely feels the subject he is speaking of."

The entrance of lady Neville, who confirmed the good account she had before brought from doctor Morton, interrupted his complaints. The hour being a late one, her ladyship now entreated her guests to retire to bed; and for the sake of the invalid, it would be advisable to have the house quiet as soon as possible.

"And must I then," exclaimed Mortimer, "leave Willowfield without once seeing my beloved Elinor?"

"Cannot

"Cannot you be content with hearing she is doing well?" returned her ladyship, smiling. "But why not defer your journey another day?"

"No," he replied; "I know it is necessary for me to go; but it is very unfortunate it should so happen."

"My dear Alfred," said lady Neville, addressing her nephew, "I very much fear you also have suffered from the shower-bath to which you were exposed this morning. Major Mortimer was too much engrossed by alarm for Elinor to allow of his taking cold; but I cannot avoid feeling apprehensive you have not escaped so well, you look so much paler than usual."

"A good night's rest, my dear madam," he replied, attempting a cheerful tone, "will, I doubt not, restore all my brilliancy of complexion."

"Yet let me at least," continued her ladyship, "if I cannot persuade you to take any other precautions, let me beg of you

you to give up your plan of returning to town to-morrow with sir Edward."

A deep blush now took place of the pallid hue his aunt had before remarked, as he hesitatingly answered, "Your fears, my dear madam, are unfounded; but if you wish it, I certainly will comply with your request."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mortimer, "what would I not give to be able just now to change situations with you!"

Clarenville turned from him, and sir, Edward observed his hand tremble as, taking up his candle, he lighted it at one of the girandoles, and immediately uttering a hasty and general good-night, left the room. Sir Edward soon followed, mentally accusing Mortimer of stupidity and folly, in not perceiving the dangerous rival he was leaving at Willowfield in the person of Clarenville.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

MORTIMER had the pleasure to learn, the following morning, Elinor had passed a quiet night, and awoke perfectly rational. On descending to the parlour, he found Ormsby and Emma already seated at the breakfast-table; the latter confirmed the good he had heard, as she had, since she arose, herself seen and spoken to Elinor.

Soon as breakfast was over, sir Edward desired Mortimer to be quick, as he was anxious to commence his journey, that he might the sooner return; and then, whilst his companion retired to complete his preparations, ascended to Clarenville's room, and tapping at the door, was immediately desired to enter.

"Already dressed!" cried sir Edward, as he stepped forward, and shook his friend

friend by the hand; "this looks well, as I hope you have thought better on the subject, and intend being my companion to town."

"My dear Ormsby, you forget I promised my aunt to remain here for a few days longer, till I am rid of this troublesome cold that is now hanging about me."

"Alfred," said sir Edward, "follow my advice in preference to lady Neville's, as, depend upon it, she is not so well acquainted with your case as I am. Return with me to town, where you are much more likely to be cured of your malady than you will be by remaining at Willowfield."

"I am not so very ill, my dear friend," returned Clarenville, with a conscious blush, "as your apprehensions lead you to suppose."

"Your case is now a very deplorable one," replied sir Edward; "but if you will not do as I wish, take my word for it, it will soon become desperate. My dear

friend,"

friend," he continued, again taking his hand, " you are now in a high fever, and surely a physician, such as my favourite, doctor P. will have a better chance of removing such a complaint than the fascinating influence of Elinor Belvington."

" Elinor !" cried Clarenville, starting at the name, " Elinor Belvington cannot, must not, be any thing to me now."

" It is for that very reason," returned sir Edward, " I wish you to remove to one more qualified to heal the wounds love has made. My dear Alfred, do not look so angrily at your brother ; forgive me for being so earnest ; but surely you are voluntarily throwing yourself into danger ; for have you not already found it impossible to withstand her attractions ? and now——"

"Now," cried Clarenville, interrupting him, " there is no longer any danger. I was, till lately, in ignorance of her previous engagement to Mortimer ; my hopes and fears are now at an end, and for the future

future she will only be considered by me in the light of a sister."

"Nay, now I give you up as an incurable," returned sir Edward; "if once you get upon that hackneyed subject of Platonics, all my advice will be thrown away. Yet one more effort will I make, nearly as desperate a one, I confess, as your case. If not for your own sake, at least for that of Elinor's, leave Hampshire till she has taken the name of Mortimer. Ah, Alfred! that change of countenance plainly tells me how much dependence is to be placed on your Platonic system. You, I make no doubt, think *Mrs. Mortimer* not half so melodious a sound as your own name would be; so I hope some other lady will think; but Elinor must not, ought not, to be of your opinion."

"Why should you imagine she ever will be so?" eagerly interrupted Clarenville; "you are now conjuring up a totally-imaginary apprehension. No, I am

am not sufficiently vain to believe she ever did, or ever will, bestow a thought on me."

"Commend me to your modesty, my good friend," cried sir Edward; "but seriously, Alfred, if you will not be persuaded to leave this fatal spot, let me entreat you, by the long friendship which has subsisted between us, and which I trust will for ever continue, let me entreat you to be on your guard in the conduct you pursue. I know you will not intentionally endeavour to supplant poor Mortimer, while absent, in the heart of Elinor; but watch narrowly your own, and let not the peace of her you love be disturbed by conflicting emotions; for though her heart should break in the struggle, her mind is too well principled to allow of her thinking for one moment of shaking off her present engagement with a man whose every thought she engrosses, and whose happiness seemed bound up in her."

"My

"My dear Ormsby," said Clarenville, "you have conquered; I know, I feel you are right. Most sincerely I thank you for this proof of steady friendship; and to shew you I am fully sensible of it, if you will defer your departure a few moments, I will——"

"My lady, sir," said a servant, now entering and addressing Clarenville, "hopes you have not forgotten the promise you made her last night, of remaining at Willowfield a few days longer."

Sir Edward turned hastily away, as his friend, after a moment's pause, hesitatingly answered, "Tell your mistress I—have not forgotten it."

"And general Clarenville, sir," continued the man, "desired me to say he would wish to speak with you at your leisure."

"I will come immediately," he replied; "and turning to sir Edward, he wished him a pleasant journey, and hastily followed the servant from the room.

Ormsby,

Ormsby, not a little provoked at his folly, now returned to the parlour, where he found Mortimer waiting for him. As he had before taken leave of Emma, there was nothing more to detain them, and the two gentlemen were soon on their road to London.

General Clarenville's business with his son was nothing very important; and having informed him he was going to accompany Mrs. Willoughby back to Beechbrook, whither she was anxious to return, on account of her little girl, and bring Caroline to Willowfield, he left him to join the former; and having seen her in safety to her home, bent his steps to Rosebrook.

Mrs. Belvington came down on learning who was in the parlour; and the general hearing Mr. Belvington was much better, proceeded cautiously to mention Elinor's accident and subsequent illness, which he represented as much less serious than it had really been.

... MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI ...

Mrs. Belvington was notwithstanding greatly shocked, and had her husband's health permitted, would immediately have flown to her darling child; but as this was impossible without alarming the still-weak invalid, she was obliged to substitute Caroline, who was wild to be on the road to Willowfield as soon as she learned the illness of her beloved sister; and so fleetly did she pursue her way thither, her companion, who had quickened his steps to keep up with her, was at length compelled to call for quarter.

Caroline, now obliged to restrain her speed, began to make inquiries relative to the cause of Elinor's accident; but finding it was occasioned by their inattention to the weather, she was so extremely incensed against Mortimer for his carelessness, that though the general had before felt not a little angry with him, and equally so with his son on the same account, he could not forbear

attempting

attempting to soften her displeasure against him. But Caroline would allow of none of the excuses he endeavoured to frame for him, till at length he said, "Mortimer was very heedless, I acknowledge, but I think my son even more culpable, as he ought to have had his senses about him, for it cannot be supposed his attention was equally engrossed."

"Oh, Mr. Clarenville is not half so much to blame," exclaimed Caroline; "if he dislikes being a third with such a pair as much as I do, it is no wonder he thought of nothing else but the awkwardness of his situation. By your account they were none of them very conversible. I know pretty well what Mortimer is when one of his glum fits comes across him. I make no doubt he was angry at his colonel's sending him off just at this time, therefore entirely forgot he had any companions with him; Elinor was infected by his taciturnity; and,

poor Mr. Clarenville," she continued, laughing at the idea, "I can easily conceive what you felt."

"Here comes Alfred," said the general; "you will therefore have an opportunity of learning if you are correct in the account of his feelings at that unfortunate time."

But Caroline declared she would not recall such unpleasant recollections to his mind; and on his joining them, she accepted, by the general's advice, his son's arm, in preference to his old one, and continued—"I had intended going for Elinor this morning, having some intelligence to communicate, which I knew she would think even more delightful than I do. Our dear lady Egerton is arrived at her cottage in the valley, and is extremely anxious to see her favourite and goddaughter."

"I am as happy to hear this news," said the general, "as I was mortified on learning, on my arrival at my sister's, that

that my old friend was absent; and shall seize the earliest opportunity of paying my respects to her."

"Take care," returned Caroline, laughing, "you are not turned to marble."

"What can you mean?" inquired the general; "not, surely, that my good friend has, unlike her former self, become cold-hearted towards her old acquaintances?"

"Oh no!" returned Caroline, warmly, "she is as warm-hearted, kind, and affectionate as ever; but has brought down with her a little petrifying animal, who has completely chilled me; indeed my blood was so congealed that I never have been myself since I saw him."

"I guess now whom you mean," cried Clarenville, laughing; "your description can apply to no one but her nephew Charles Egerton, who was a fellow-student with me at Cambridge. He is, as you say, a most petrifying animal at first sight; but when you are better acquaint-

ed with him, you will pronounce his heart to be as warm as you paint his aunt's. But he differs in one respect from the idea you led us to form of him; he cannot claim the appellation of her *little* nephew."

"In good truth he cannot," returned Caroline; "for such a monster was never beheld. He really is within half an inch of Rosebrook church steeple; and then he looks so extremely proud of his gigantic height, and makes it so serious a subject withal, that I felt myself fast shrinking into the diminutive size of poor little Grildrig, and felt as much terrified as he was at the enormous figure of the first Brobdinagian; and when this giant first opened his lips, I expected to be stunned with the loud roar that would issue from them."

"In this instance, at least, you were agreeably mistaken," said Clarenville, much amused, "as my friend Charles's voice is remarkably pleasant."

"Yes," she returned, "when he pleases to make use of the organ of speech; but that is but seldom; at least so it appeared, last evening, when he accompanied his aunt to the parsonage, not a dozen words did he honour the company with; certainly my father was not present, he had therefore only females for his companions; and before those, I suppose, his high mightiness would not condescend to exert himself. The entire command he has also over his muscles is really very edifying, and his gravity appears nearly immoveable. Once, indeed, I saw something approaching to a smile on his grim features, which, had he allowed it a little more play, would have been greatly to his advantage; as it was, I must acknowledge, it had the effect of a sunbeam breaking through a cloud; but the envious vapour soon overshadowed it, and all became dark and dreary as before."

"Under all this apparent absence and

reserve," replied Clarenville, "I am certain he was accurately observing and commenting on every thing that occurred; and, take my word for it, not a sentence passed unheard or unnoticed by him."

"Well," cried Caroline, "to judge from appearances, he did not much admire the company at the parsonage; but we have one hope left—he has not yet seen Elinor."

"Whom no one can know and not love," said the general, warmly.

"Oh unfortunate torpedo!" exclaimed Caroline, "what a terrible fate is in store for you! for if you should happen to be thrown into this cruel predicament, as others have been before you, how dreadful will be the death your cold constitution is doomed to—that of being consumed by a slow fire!"

They were now arrived at the Lodge, and Caroline leaving her companions, ran eagerly up to her sister's room. Elinor's

nor's fever had left her much weakened by the violence of its attack; but she was able to express the pleasure she felt at seeing her young sister, who now, to the surprise of all the inhabitants of the Lodge, established herself by the bedside of the invalid, as quietly as Elinor could have done, and was her attentive nurse for the two following days, never leaving the room, except to meals, which she requested permission to take in the adjoining one; and scarcely could the general believe, from the account he received of the thoughtful young nurse above stairs, she could be the same wild, rattling girl who had been his companion from Rosebrook a few hours before.

On the third day of her sister's arrival, Elinor was enabled to leave her chamber, and recline on a sofa in the dressing-room. Mrs. Belvington, fearful of alarming her husband, had not dared to visit her darling child; but she heard regularly twice a-day how she was

going on from Clarenville, who almost lived on the road to and from Rosebrook.

When Elinor was again able to enjoy the society of her friends, Caroline frequently became his companion. He bore with her arch looks and covert raillery, that he might hear her talk of a sister so deservedly beloved. Caroline, who was never weary of this theme, found an attentive auditor for her numerous anecdotes of the many instances of kindness she had received from Elinor—of the scrapes she had brought her safely through, when by some wild prank her father's displeasure had been incurred; as he never had cause to be angry with Elinor in the whole course of her life; and every one would allow she was his pet; "And yet, now," would Caroline exclaim, "he is anxious to see her the wife of Mortimer, though he must be aware it is the signal for separation from his child, who will, of course, be obliged to leave us; and if colonel Wardley's

ley's regiment is ordered to America, which will most likely be the case, what shall not we all endure in knowing she is going to the seat of war, and encountering danger and disease in a foreign land!"

Clarenville always shrunk from this view of the subject, and he would so earnestly entreat Caroline not to allow herself to dwell on this harrowing topic, that her suspicions relative to his attachment for her sister were every moment more confirmed; and most earnestly did, she hope some event would occur to prevent the intended union, and give her beloved Elinor to one more deserving her.

Lady Neville had grown so partial to Caroline, that she entreated Mrs. Belvington, when the latter was able to visit Willowfield, not to take her from thence at present. The general had also become much attached to her; indeed the tender affection she evinced for Eli

nor would alone have won his heart; but Caroline's vivacity was so unaffected, her arch drollery so genuine, it was impossible to be long in her society without feeling a warm and animated regard for her, and the excellent management she had been under from her infancy rendered her spirits exhilarating rather than fatiguing, as is too often the case with many who unrestrainedly give way to their exuberance.

This day Caroline joined the party below at table, but on the removal of the cloth was hastening back to her sister, when Emma requested her to remain, and she would endeavour to entertain Elinor for a short time.

On her leaving the room, lady Neville, observing a smile on the countenance of the general and his lady, inquired the cause of it. Mrs. Clarenville, still smiling, though she could not suppress a sigh, replied, "Emma, I dare say, is gone to communicate to her friend the

the contents of a letter she received this morning from sir Edward; we are yet ignorant what it contains; but from her apparent absence and abstraction of mind, I conjecture sir Edward's business is in a state of greater forwardness than he expected, and he has in consequence claimed her promise of becoming his at no very distant period."

Mrs. Clarenville was not wrong in her conjectures. Her daughter had now sought Elinor for that purpose, and on finding her so much recovered, put Ormsby's letter into her hand. Elinor, after perusing it, threw her arms around the neck of her friend, and entreated her to comply with sir Edward's request, and appoint an early day for the commencement of his happiness.

"You do not intend, I hope," she continued, seeing Emma hesitate—"you are not so cruel as to recede from your promise."

"No," returned her friend, "I am

not

not thinking of that; but at present you are not equal to the office you have engaged to perform, therefore it had better be deferred a little while longer."

"Not a day on my account," replied Elinor, laughing; "I am able to accompany you to church to-morrow, if required; so do not draw on me the ill-will of sir Edward, when I am perfectly innocent of the charge. Only let me know the time, and I promise to have all my finery in readiness."

Emma now confessed she had been thinking of the next week but one, and at length Elinor brought her to name the very day.

"And now," said Emma, "I will send my aunt to you, and shall communicate your wish to my mother."

"I have no objection," said Elinor, smiling, "to your informing either your mother or sir Edward, that the earlier the day, the better satisfied I shall be."

"Ah, Elinor!" returned Emma, as

she

she was leaving the room, "how much I wish Mortimer was coming down with Ormsby on the same errand!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Elinor, mentally, as her friend closed the door; then starting at this involuntary exclamation, a blush of shame dyed her cheek, and she hastily resumed the perusal of the volume which Emma's entrance had interrupted, and endeavoured to lose, in the interest it excited, the painful ideas thus called forth; but she was soon joined by lady Neville, who, standing with the door half open in her hand, requested permission for a very importunate gentleman's admittance to her *sanctum*.

Elinor coloured highly as she cast a glance towards the entrance of the apartment; but catching a view of the general waiting her assent, she hastily rose from the sofa, and eagerly entreated him to come in. He instantly obeyed, delighted once more to see his favourite; and having obliged her to resume her

reclining

reclining posture, made the most affectionate inquiries after her health. Elinor's countenance, animated by the pleasure the meeting him had occasioned, did not at first betray the languor her illness had left; but the bright bloom soon subsiding, the general perceived the ravages sickness had made in her still-beautiful face.

Mrs. Clarenville did not for some time join the party assembled in Elinor's dressing-room; and the conversation soon turned upon Caroline, whom, the general informed her sister, his son had persuaded to ride out with him, though he did not add on horseback, aware of his favourite's terror of the exercise. Lady Neville spoke in terms of the warmest approbation of the apparently-giddy and high-spirited Caroline, so complétly metamorphosing herself into the gentle, tender, and useful companion she had proved herself to be the last two days.

Elinor listened with delight, and assured

sured lady Neville, that as her intimacy with her sister increased, the amiable qualities of her heart would daily unfold themselves.

"It is ever thus with Caroline," she continued; "the slightest indisposition of those she loves calls every affection of her warm heart into action; she forsakes all her favourite amusements, and will, for hours, exert every faculty to render herself either useful or entertaining. My father, who did not know her so well as I do, was astonished at finding she was so excellent a nurse, and has frequently, since this last serious attack, spoke of the surprise he felt at the quiet tenderness of her manner, and the thoughtfulness with which she provided for every incident."

"And how came Mr. Belvington to be ignorant of the treasure he possesses in his youngest daughter?" inquired lady Neville.

"My

"My father being, you know, of a serious turn of mind," she replied, "Caroline's spirits and gaiety of heart have sometimes alarmed him, as he has seen too many instances of their degenerating into levity when not properly curbeb; and he is too affectionate a parent not to wish to see us as perfect as possible; my sister has therefore felt rather more restraint in his presence than his other children ever did, and my father, in consequence, was not so thoroughly acquainted with her as he has lately become; for my mother tells me, since Caroline's recovery from that violent attack on her lungs, previous to my visit to Ashgrove, she has been very much his companion, and he now finds she can be serious when necessary, and has been taught that difficult maxim of being 'merry and wise."

"I am happy in reflecting Mr. Belvington has such a comfort in store," re-

turned

turned lady Neville; "he will greatly require it when obliged to part with one so deservedly, so highly valued."

The entrance of Mrs. Clarenville spared Elinor any reply to this remark, and the former joining their circle, said, "We must make up our minds to parting with Emma. I find sir Edward has already claimed the fulfilment of her promise."

"I am perfectly ready to resign her," said the general, affecting a cheerful tone. "We shall still have our eldest daughter with us," he continued, affectionately embracing Elinor; "and a short time will again restore us to the society of our other dear child; therefore I see no great cause for regret."

"And Alfred, I hope, will soon give you a third daughter," said lady Neville; "I told him last night he ought not to be so gloomy as to exclude the society of women from that delightful spot he intends residing on. But, Elinor, my love, you are not well; we have fatigued you,

I greatly

I greatly fear; and to prevent your exerting yourself in any farther conversation, my brother will read to us, if you find yourself equal to it, and then we shall all be kept quiet."

Elinor entreated the general to comply with this request, who, taking up the book she had been reading, amused his auditors with its contents till Caroline's voice on the stairs interrupted him. She soon after entered, exclaiming, as she advanced to her sister, "You are all looking so comfortable here that I will not disturb you—only inquire how your patient is, deliver a long string of loves I met with on the road, and then vanish again."

"Oh no," returned lady Neville, "let us have all your adventures at full length, if it will not be too much for Elinor."

The latter hastily assured her she was not afraid of being fatigued with the recital, and Caroline archly added, "Oh, I know all the incidents of my excursion

sion will prove highly interesting to my sister."

Elinor faintly blushed; and the narrator drawing a small ottoman to the sofa, seated herself upon it, and commenced her relation.

"The first person we met, about a mile from hence, was the noble colonel himself, who was coming, full post to Willowfield, to inquire after the fair Elinor; but my account sent him as fast back again, well pleased to hear so good a one, which he informed me must be imparted to his numerous correspondents before the post left Edgewold that evening. Scarcely had we parted from him when we came in contact, and in a terribly-narrow lane too, with—whom do you think, general? no less a person than the *Torpedo*.

"Who or what can you possibly mean, Caroline?" inquired Elinor, in great surprise.

"Oh! a most tremendous personage!" returned

returned her sister, who now commenced a ludicrous description of Mr. Egerton's visit to Rosebrook.

"I find from your relation," said lady Neville, "my old friend is returned; I fear she will accuse me of negligence at least in not having taken the slightest notice of her arrival; my dear Caroline, why did you not mention this before?"

"My dear madam," she replied, "I believe you must allow more than one to shelter themselves under the same excuse Mr. Clarenville made for you and Mrs. Clarenville; for he very obligingly spared me the trouble of answering, and assured her ladyship the thoughts of both had been completely engrossed by Elinor's illness. Lady Egerton desired him not to say another word of apology, as she should not have stood on ceremony with such old and dear friends, had she not thought you were all too much occupied by her dear goddaughter's indisposition not to dispense with her presence

sence at that time; and she had had constant intelligence of her favourite's health from Rosebrook. Mr. Clarenville then permitted me to say, Elinor would be most happy to see her on the morrow; but by this digression I had nearly lost sight of my *Torpedo*.

"The little animal was driving his aunt in his gig, and condescended to smile, and say he was extremely glad to see Mr. Clarenville, who professed himself equally delighted to meet him. The first compliments over, his highness condescended to give me the novel information of its being a very beautiful evening. I had half a mind to contradict him, and say it looked like rain, but his impenetrable gravity froze my tongue. I was then told the ruts in the lane were very deep; to which, as Miss Byron says, 'I bowed as I sat;' for I found it impossible to speak, having just caught the wicked eye of my companion, who then said he hoped to see a great deal of his friend

friend during his stay in Hampshire; and then, after another observation on the beauty of the country, we managed to pass each other; and here I am safely returned."

"And now," said Mrs. Clarenville, "we will leave you with your sister, who will not, I think, be sorry for our departure, that she may enjoy a little quiet; and poor Alfred, who is quite alone, will wish for our society."

Early on the following morning, lady Egerton paid her promised visit to Willowfield, and after conversing some time with the party assembled in the drawing-room, followed Caroline to Elinor's apartment.

When the subject of Mr. Belvington's illness had been discussed, lady Egerton led to the one uppermost in her own mind—that of Elinor's engagement with Mortimer.

"I have learned from your mother, my love," she continued, "the cause of its

its being so hastily concluded; but I cannot rest satisfied without hearing from your own lips that it has the full and entire concurrence of your heart. Tell me, Elinor, have you that regard for major Mortimer which will ensure your happiness in so solemn an engagement? If you feel you have not, let no consideration tempt you to forfeit, not only your own felicity, but that of the man whose warm affections for you will never be satisfied with the cold return of duty alone; and though he may now, for a short time, suffer pain from the disappointment, reflect how much that is to be preferred to the daily and hourly misery resulting from unrequited affection, ending but with life! I know what you are now going to tell me—that you have secured your father's happiness by thus complying with his earnest wishes to see you the wife of Mortimer; but, my Elinor, do not imagine your father can taste of

happiness if he sees his daughter estranged from it."

"I ought not," replied Elinor, struggling to repress her agitation—"I cannot have any objection against major Mortimer."

"Objection!" repeated lady Egerton, interrupting her. "My dear Elinor, that word will go but a small way in such a momentous matter as the one we are now discussing; but I will not distress you farther at present, my sweet child; you have a mother, a tender and affectionate parent—open your mind to her while it is yet in your power; she is not, I know, more satisfied with these hasty proceedings than I am. Prove well your own heart; and if you find it less warmly attached to major Mortimer than it ought to be, let nothing tempt you to fulfil your engagement without first consulting your mother."

The entrance of Emma now put a stop

to

to any further conversation on this topic, and lady Egerton, perceiving Elinor much agitated by what had passed, soon left her to reflect upon it, and returned with the former to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning after lady Egerton's visit, Elinor joined her friends in the usual sitting-room; and when she again saw Clarenville, and heard his animated congratulations on her recovery, a blush of pleasure passed across her still-pale countenance, and she answered him in the same cheerful tone he had been accustomed to listen to with delight at Ashgrove.

Caroline, who had witnessed the embarrassment of her manner towards him, now observed and wondered at the

change, which she in vain endeavoured to account for, till lady Egerton's name being casually mentioned, she recollected her having been some time alone with Elinor on the preceding day, and also recalled to her mind how much more cheerful her sister had become in the evening than she had known her since her return from Ashgrove.

Delighted to see her beloved Elinor again herself, she determined to take no notice of the alteration; and her own spirits rising in proportion, she was even more animated than usual.

Clarenville seemed equally to have recovered his spirits; he was now the same animated, intelligent Clarenville Elinor had first known on the evening of the Lesford ball; and in social and cheerful conversation the morning passed so rapidly, that scarcely could any of the party believe it was the first dinner-bell whose loud ringing so soon obliged them to separate.

General

General Clarenville, after the repast had been removed, proposed to Elinor taking a little airing with him, and he would drive her round by Rosebrook, that she might have an opportunity of seeing her father.

"If you take Elinor in the curricle," said lady Neville, "Mrs. Clarenville and I will follow in my little garden-chair; she will not be afraid of trusting herself with my ponies."

Emma, who had not been present when Caroline cautioned the party to be silent respecting the ride she had taken with Clarenville, now said to her, "We will take compassion, Caroline, on poor Alfred, and accompany him on horseback."

Elinor starting, turned hastily towards her sister, and in an agitated tone said, "You do not, I hope, my dearest sister, venture upon so dangerous an exercise."

"Scarcely a day has elapsed, my dear Elinor, since you went to Ashgrove," returned

returned Caroline, "without my accompanying one of my brothers in a ride; be content, my dearest sister, when I assure you it is by my father's particular wish; and another time I will give you the reasons he adduced to my mother for thus allowing me."

"Let us hear them now, my dear Caroline," said the general, "and how you first gained courage to begin; the relation will be of service to us all."

"I was not deficient in courage, my dear sir, from the first—nay, was perhaps rather too much inclined to the contrary extreme, as you will find.

"I was returning from a walk on the day after Mortimer's arrival at Rosebrook when he met me, and of course was obliged to dismount, and attend me back to the house, from whence he was just come; and I remember, in the midst of a very interesting conversation—" and here Caroline looked archly towards Elinor—"I interrupted him in a subject I

was

was heartily sick of, by requesting to mount the animal he had been riding."

"And was major Mortimer," hastily interrupted Elinor, "so very inconsiderate as to allow of your doing so?"

"Poor Mortimer!" returned Caroline, half-laughing, "this is the second lash you have received in consequence of your good-nature. My mother meeting me so gallantly mounted, looked almost as angry as you do at this moment; I was soon lowered from my high station, and have to thank my father alone for not being shorter by the head at this present moment."

"And what did Mr. Belvington say in excuse for his favourite Mortimer?" inquired Mrs. Clarenville.

"He did not excuse him at all," replied Caroline; "on the contrary, he told him he was very wrong to allow of my riding without a safer saddle; but when my mother proceeded to say, even with the most secure one she never

could approve of it, my father ventured to differ from her."

"What arguments could he find sufficiently weighty," inquired Elinor, "to induce her again to allow of your venturing? Oh! surely my mother never could really approve the plan?"

"I do not say that she did entirely at first," replied Caroline; "yet she could not but acknowledge both my eldest sister and Cecilia had been accustomed to ride on horseback for many years before; the former married without meeting with the slightest accident; and that the same watchful eye which had been over them was not withdrawn from me; that equally-serious accidents as the one she alluded to had been met with, not only in carriages also, but whilst merely walking in the quiet manner we were then doing, as he reminded her had been the case but the day before, when a poor man, returning from his work, had slipped down on the road, and dislocated

his

his neck, and before proper assistance could be procured he expired. But, my dear Elinor," she continued, seeing her sister's spirits were unequal to any farther discussion, "I am not going to torment you with my company this evening, as business of the utmost importance will keep me at home; therefore you may enjoy yourself without any drawback."

"I will not deprive you of any pleasure," returned Elinor, as she arose to quit the room; "and as I do not feel quite well enough to accept general Clarenville's kind offer, if I can be of any service to you in transacting the important business you spoke of, come to me in my dressing-room, and instruct me how to begin;" and now hastily passing her sister's chair, she retreated to her own apartment; but scarcely had she closed the door when a gentle tap obliged her to return to it, and she found, on opening it, the intruder was no other than the general.

"Will you forgive me, my sweet love," he exclaimed, as he held out his hand to her, "for thus invading your sanctuary? but I could not hear of your giving up an excursion, which I know will be of service to you, without venturing a word in its favour. We sober folk," he continued, with a smile, "will take a different road to our younger friends; at any rate, I should not have allowed so large a party to call at Rosebrook in Mr. Belvington's still-delicate state of health; therefore do not leave me to the society of those noisy mortals, but have a little compassion on your old friend."

"My kind, indulgent monitor!" cried Elinor, gratefully pressing the hand of the general, "I will be entirely guided by your wishes in this respect. I knew by your countenance, before I left the parlour, you were hurt by my behaviour; but indeed I could not help it; no, I could not avoid feeling dreadfully alarmed when I found my dear sister intend-

ed

ed venturing on the same dangerous exercise which had been so fatal to my poor brother, and I own I dread the consequences of it."

"Restrain these apprehensions, my beloved child," said the general; and perceiving how much she was agitated, he placed her on the sofa, and seated himself beside her—"I trust and believe you have no grounds for them; Alfred has assured me your sister rides remarkably well, and the horse Mr. Coleridge has given her is the gentlest of its kind. Caroline proceeds very quietly on the road; and I think I may safely add, she will never attempt to clear a gate, which I understand was the cause of the accident you all so feelingly lament.

"Poor Emma is extremely uneasy at having so unconsciously distressed you; it was indeed particularly unfortunate, just at this time when your nerves have been weakened by your recent illness;

but still, I think a quiet ride with me will not hurt you."

"If you consider it wrong in me, my dear sir," replied Elinor, "thus to give way to my apprehensions, I will make a strong effort to overcome them. The feelings of my kind friends have been already too much harassed on my account, and I will not, if possible, again wound them by displaying my coward fears; therefore do not let the party be broken up; we will go, as was originally proposed by Emma, and I will endeavour both to appear and feel courageous."

"Not to-day, my love," said the general, as he affectionately thanked her for this proof of regard; "perhaps the first time you venture out, it will be better to go by ourselves."

"No, my dear sir, indulge me in letting me have my own way in this instance, lest my courage should, like Acres's, fail when it came to the point," replied Elinor, attempting to smile.

"My

"My excellent Elinor, it shall be as you wish," said the general, as he left her to prepare for his ride; "what an example of resolution and consideration for the comfort of others do you set us!"

Poor Elinor felt how little she deserved these praises, when Clarenville assisted her into the curricle; as the general, who had been detained, was preparing to take the reins from the servant, his son, in a low voice, said to him, "Do you not think Miss Belvington would be better satisfied if you were to accompany her sister on horseback? Perhaps she might consider her safer under your escort, as you certainly have more influence over her than I have, and she would ride with more care under your eye than I could persuade her to do."

"If I thought Elinor safe with you," said the general, hesitatingly.

"Safe! my dear sir," eagerly interrupted Clarenville, "you must know I have been in the habit of driving for many

many years, and even my mother is not afraid of my skill in that point."

"Here is Elinor," said the general, advancing to her, "wondering what we are so long detaining her for—she shall decide for us;" then, after repeating the subject of their conversation, he continued, "what say you, my love? which are you the most apprehensive for—Caroline or yourself?"

"Not for myself, certainly," replied Elinor, deeply blushing, "whoever has the goodness to take charge of me."

"Will you then trust yourself with me?" said Clarenville, as he leaped into the curricle; "and I think you will have more confidence in my father as an escort to your sister."

Elinor had no reasonable objection to this change of plan, and they were soon out of sight of the house, as Clarenville determined to drive rather fast, that his companion might not at present catch a view of her sister. Elinor as carefully

avoided looking back to the party, who were following, and at the same time endeavoured to give all her attention to the subject Clarenville wished to engage her in, that she might not hear their voices, which the breeze now and then wafted towards her. Not long was this attention constrained; the conversation of Clarenville soon interested her sufficiently to render it involuntary; and he continued to keep the advantage of the party till they had advanced several miles on their excursion.

The voice of lady Neville, directing Elinor's attention to a plant near the road, first made her look around, when she perceived Caroline between Emma and the general, riding very quietly, and apparently engaged in earnest conversation with her companions. For some moments she attentively observed her, till seeing the perfect ease with which she sat her horse, and the gentle appearance of the animal, she was able to turn to-

wards

wards the object lady Neville had desired her to look at, and join her in admiring it, as one of the most beautiful of the wild flowers they were in the habit of examining and preserving.

"My aunt's partiality for flowers," said Clarenville, "particularly pleases me, as she can, unlike florists in general, admire the exquisite productions of uncultivated nature, full as much as she does her own beautiful collection in the pleasure-grounds and green-house."

"I remember," returned Elinor, "when I first had the pleasure of seeing lady Neville at Bath, my attention was particularly attracted towards her by an argument she was engaged in with a clever, but very self-sufficient gentleman. The conversation began by admiring the elegant collection of plants in the room; lady Neville, pointing out one of the most beautiful, said it resembled very much a wild flower, which she named. The gentleman was extremely angry at her comparing

comparing 'so rare a plant to a *weed!*' when lady Neville inquired if he called all wild flowers weeds, as in that case many of the most fragrant which now adorn our gardens would be rooted up by the gardener; and she believed every one would be sorry if the common woodbine and sweet-briar were not allowed a place near the house or arbour, because they were *weeds*, and neither primroses or violets were called by that appellation."

"And what reply did my aunt's antagonist make to this?" inquired Clarenville.

"Why," replied Elinor, "in a very consequential tone he said, 'And pray, madam, if I may presume to ask, to what do you apply that word, or is there such a thing as a weed in your opinion?'—'Certainly,' returned lady Neville, 'I call every plant one which has no business in the place where it grows. For instance, I should consider a straggling tulip, or poppy, or any other flower, a weed, in a bed of carrots or onions, and *vice versa*."

Lady

Lady Neville now interrupted Elinor, by inviting her to join Mrs. Clarenville and herself in walking down the narrow lane they were then entering, as the carriage-road was but indifferent. Clarenville, giving the curricle to the care of his servant, joined the party, and mentioned to his aunt the subject they had been conversing on.

Lady Neville laughed as she recalled to her recollection the extreme anger of the poor florist, upon finding the votes, at the conclusion of the argument, against him.

"I shall always, my dear Elinor, remember that day with pleasure," continued her ladyship, "as it was the commencement of our present acquaintance; and when you repeated to Mrs. Benfield, by lady Egerton's request, your father's sentiments on the study of nature, it was the animated expression of your countenance, that, reminding me of an old friend, induced me to make those inquiries relative to yourself which led to the

discovery

discovery of the near relationship between you and one of my earliest and dearest friends."

"And may I ask what Mr. Belvington's sentiments were?" inquired Clarenville.

"My father," replied Elinor, "has not only encouraged our admiration of the more strikingly-glorious and stupendous works of the Creator, but has likewise directed our attention to the most minute, and not less wonderful productions of the same hand, and has always taught us to remark, that 'not a tree, a plant, a leaf, or flower, but contains a folio volume.' He has pointed out to us, not only the beauty of the flower to the eye, though that is in itself a source of infinite delight, but he has wished us to go farther—to examine it as a piece of art which it is impossible to equal—and has remarked to us the beautiful dependence of each part of nature on the other."

"It is most true," returned lady Neville; "and when such a man as Mr. Belvington

Belvington encourages the pursuit in his children, of what consequence are the ridiculous prejudices you so frequently hear brought forward against it? But here are our equestrians, and I see we have passed the roughest road."

They now again ascended the carriages, and the general perceiving Elinor could not forbear watching her sister, desired his son to drive off with his companion. Clarenville gladly obeyed, preferring a *tête-à-tête* with her to warding off Caroline's raillery, which he every moment dreaded Elinor would understand.

On their arrival at Rosebrook they had the satisfaction to find Mr. Belvington's health had allowed him to take an airing in Mr. Coleridge's carriage, attended by his wife; and as their return was uncertain, Clarenville, who was apprehensive Elinor might suffer from the evening-air, persuaded her to consent to his driving her back to Willowfield.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

THE time now rapidly approached for sir Edward's return; and Mrs. Clarenville's spirits were not less agitated than her daughter's. Emma had, from infancy, been the constant companion of her mother; and as the day of separation drew near, it required the united efforts of Elinor and Clarenville to enable her to bear the thought of parting with her beloved child with any degree of fortitude. The former was scarcely ever absent from her, and lady Neville's sociable was now preferred to the curricle and garden-chair, as Elinor wished to leave Mrs. Clarenville as little as possible. The general usually rode with his daughter and Caroline, whom her sister could seldom induce to join the

the party in the sociable, and the vacant seat was generally occupied by Clarenville, who no longer appeared to take delight in his former favourite exercise. His horse sometimes had lost a shoe, and at another was lame in the hind or fore foot, though it had not escaped Caroline's observation, that on Elinor's lamenting one day, as she was painting, her carelessness in not bringing a valuable colour with her from Rosebrook, which would prevent the finishing what she was about, Clarenville hastily left the room, and in a short time returned with the article she was in distress for. Elinor blushed as she thanked him, and Caroline, in a low voice, congratulated him on the recovery of his favourite horse from its lameness.

The days now glided rapidly by; to Elinor they almost flew; and as the time approached when her resolution was to be put to the test, time seemed to borrow wings. Lady Egerton's advice had

had sunk deep into her heart, and the longer she reflected on it, the more determined she became to pursue it. Mortimer was in a few days to follow sir Edward; and after many hours given to reflection, she had resolved upon laying open her whole heart to her mother, at least as far as he was concerned, and entreat her counsel how to act, as she now almost hourly felt it would be impossible for her ever to return his regard in the sincere manner lady Egerton had convinced her was necessary for his happiness as well as her own. No opportunity for it had yet occurred; but she hoped, when the bustle of the expected wedding was over, her time would be a little more at her own command; till then, she had promised the general to be as little absent from Mrs. Clarenville as possible; and as she saw the benefit almost every individual of the family derived from her exertions, she generously endeavoured to lay aside all selfish feelings for the present,

sent, and do all in her power to promote the happiness of those round her.

Mr. Belvington, knowing Elinor could not leave her friends, had requested Caroline to return home for a few days, and endeavour by her attention to re-establish the health of her mother, which was greatly shattered by the alarm and anxiety she had lately suffered so much from. Caroline, ardently attached to her maternal parent, was on the road to Rosebrook a few minutes after her father's note had reached her, but promised Emma to return on the day appointed; and join her sister in the office of bridemaid.

Two mornings previous to it, she again made her appearance in the drawing-room; and after answering Elinor's anxious inquiries, and informing the company assembled her time was very limited, as half an hour was the longest she could be spared from home, seated herself on one of her favourite ottomans,

at

at the feet of her sister, and then began —"My dear Elinor, I have the most surprising intelligence to communicate you ever heard; I have also some of the most heart-breaking; but as I always wish to defer the evil hour as long as possible, first, I will relate my good, and then retire with you, and gently disclose the bad."

"Let us hear the former then, by all means," said lady Neville; "it will enable us to bear your afflicting tidings better."

"My dear madam," returned Caroline, "they will not be terrible to any one except Elinor; and faintings or hysterics we must be prepared for: but let that pass."

"Willingly," replied her sister, laughing, "if you will but satisfy the curiosity you have raised."

"Well then, is it not surprising that my father, who has scarcely ever stirred

from his own village, or those immediately adjacent, for many years, has not only consented, but proposed our going next week to S——, which, you know, is at the enormous distance of twenty miles at least?"

"It will be of great benefit to him, I have no doubt," remarked lady Neville; "but I must confess, my dear Caroline, I expected something still more wonderful."

"My dear madam, I have not done yet; the second wonder is, that I am allowed, provided I behave like a good little girl till the time arrives, to accompany papa and mamma thither; and last, though not least, lady Egerton, who was with us yesterday, has consented, upon the petition of the Torpedo, to join us there. What think you of that petrifying animal feeling a wish to make one of our party?"

"I am not at all surprised at his request,"

quest," said Clarenville, laughing. "Have you forgotten he will then be near his native element?"

"Oh, how stupid I was!" replied Caroline, as she joined in the general laugh; "how terribly dull, not to think of that circumstance! but, upon recollection, it is no wonder if my faculties are a little benumbed; for I remember feeling the touch of one of my Torpedo's fins yesterday, when he took the tea for his aunt from my hands; and whether I really felt any electric shock, or was only fearful of it, certain it is, we very nearly let the cup fall between us, and in our efforts to save it I met with the misfortune I dreaded."

"My dear Mrs. Clarenville," said lady Neville, "what say you to a little trip to S——; I really think it would be a very good plan; and you will then be in the direct road to Elmsly Park."

"An excellent thought indeed, my dear sister," returned the general. "I

will not allow a negative to be put upon it. Elinor, I can see, has no dislike to bearing us company, and a little amusement will enliven us all."

Mrs. Clarenville, perceiving how agreeable this proposal was to all her friends, offered no objection to it; only requesting she might he allowed to remain at home when she did not feel herself equal to the exertion of mixing with society. This being willingly agreed to, Clarenville offered to ride over on the morrow, and secure lodgings.

"You will have a companion then, if such is your intention," said Caroline, "as the Torpedo is going on the same errand. And now, my dear Elinor, that this affair is settled, are you not a little fidgetty about my dismals, which must come next?"

"You must first acquire a little of Mr. Egerton's gravity," replied Elinor, "before you can succeed in imposing upon me; you may as well therefore spare me the

the trouble of laying aside my work, by revealing your intelligence where you now are."

"No, I cannot consent to such a proceeding," returned her sister; "come, I will not detain you long from this fascinating society—not more than five minutes by Mr. Clarenville's watch, I promise you."

"Well, Caroline," said Elinor, when they arrived at the dressing-room of the latter, "what have you to communicate?"

"I am extremely sorry, my dear sister, at being the messenger appointed to convey this most distressing account; but——"

"Be quick, my dear Caroline, I entreat, or my patience will be quite exhausted."

"Why, what an impatient creature you are become, Elinor! a touch of the Torpedo would be of infinite service here; this imitation might be rendered

 a little

a little more torpid, and you would not then turn away with such a terrible look of impatience. Well, one moment more, and your curiosity shall be gratified," continued Caroline, searching for something in her straw ridicule as she spoke. "Oh gracious! I cannot find it anywhere! Surely I have not left poor Mortimer's epistle, wet with tears, on the road!"

Elinor hastily turned towards her sister, who, after a moment or two had elapsed, exclaimed, "Oh, no! here it is! how fortunate! But I may as well tell you at once what it contains.—Poor, poor Mortimer! he cannot return to Rosebrook until the expiration of another fortnight! But I declare my intelligence has produced quite a contrary effect to that I expected; you look even happier than you did when I first entered the drawing-room; how very strange!"

"Do you intend I should read that letter, Caroline," said Elinor, deeply blushing,

blushing, "or am I to be kept in suspense for another half-hour?"

"If the perusal of it has the same happy effect my intelligence appears to have created, how transported with pleasure you will be before that time is elapsed! Well, I will leave you to enjoy it undisturbed, as I can stay no longer; so adieu! I shall be with you early on Wednesday morning."

Caroline now left the room; and, as she surmised, the intelligence of Mortimer's continued absence did not diminish Elinor's satisfaction: but the style of his letter most sensibly affected her, as in every line she saw how strongly he was attached to her. It was addressed to her mother, and contained bitter lamentations at being obliged to continue so long absent from Rosebrook, and earnest wishes for his beloved Elinor's perfect restoration to health.

Her resolution relative to breaking off her engagement with him again waver-

 ed.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARAS

ed. "Yet did not my dear lady Egerton say," she mentally exclaimed—"did she not assure me his happiness would be eventually destroyed, if I could not return his affection with the warmth it deserved, and every passing moment convinces me that will never be in my power. Ah! little does my father suspect his Elinor is meditating an act so contrary to his wishes; how shall I ever meet his eye after such an explanation! I know he will not reproach me for my instability, but he cannot hide his look of dejection and disappointed hope; yet how terrible is the alternative!"

Elinor was now awakened from her reverie by the entrance of Emma, who, in an agitated voice, exclaimed, "Elinor, dear Elinor, Ormsby is already arrived!"

"And do you wish me to send him back again?" said Elinor, kissing the blushing cheek of her friend; "if so, I will deliver your commands to him."

"How

"How very cruel you are, Elinor! I do not believe Caroline would have behaved worse."

"Well," returned Elinor, "what shall I do? Will you accompany me to the drawing-room, or must I return alone, and let sir Edward know where to find you? or would you have me seek Mrs. Clarenville, and impart the important intelligence to her?"

"I came purposely to entreat you would, dear Elinor," replied her friend.

"I do not doubt your word," said Elinor, as she closed the door; and meeting sir Edward in the gallery, she informed him he would find Emma in her dressing-room, and then proceeded to Mrs. Clarenville's apartment.

When the family again met at dinner, Clarenville took his accustomed seat by Elinor. Sir Edward shook his head reproachfully at him; and when the cloth was removed, suddenly turning to him, he exclaimed—"Alfred, I have

 not

not yet learned how you have arranged the disagreement amongst your tenants, which you feared would prove so serious."

"I am happy to say," returned Clarenville, with a heightened colour, "it is most amicably settled."

"And were you the peace-maker?" inquired sir Edward.

"No, my steward informed me by letter, a few days after you left us, my interference was not necessary."

"And how have you been employing yourself during my absence?" again inquired sir Edward—"Winding the silken thread off ivory reels when they command whom man is born to please? —have you made him very useful, Miss Belvington?"

"I trust none of the ladies have found us idle," said the general, smiling; "indeed we seem all so well pleased with each other, that it has been agreed, *nem. con.* to continue together yet a little longer,

ger, and Alfred will accompany Mr. Egerton to S—— to-morrow, in a search for lodgings, as his aunt intends meeting us there with our Rosebrook friends, Mr. Belvington having been advised to go thither for the more perfect restoration of his health. Our stay will not exceed a fortnight, and will, I hope, be of service to us all."

"I trust it will prove of infinite benefit to Mr. Belvington," returned sir Edward; "but there are cases," he continued, looking expressively at Clarenville, "for which the air of Hampshire is not sufficiently bracing. I have known disorders which only betrayed themselves at intervals by the trembling of the whole frame, and sometimes merely by the hand or voice, whilst in other respects, frequent alterations of countenance excepted, the patient appears in perfect health. Were I attacked with such a complaint myself, or had I a friend (who would take my advice) in

such a deplorable state, I should prescribe travelling and frequent change of scene, instead of any fixed abode at a watering-place."

Clarenville's colour considerably heightened, but he took no farther notice of this speech; and the general, laughing, said—"When he found himself seized with this kind of ague, or observed the symptoms of it in another, he would apply to doctor Ormsby for advice."

The conversation now became more general; Clarenville took care to avoid his friend during the remainder of the day, and early the next morning proceeded to Rosebrook, and accompanied Mr. Egerton to S——, where they succeeded, after a little difficulty, in procuring pleasant lodgings for their respective parties, within a short distance of each other.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

EARLY on the following morning the bridal party proceeded to Rosebrook church, as it was the wish of general Clarenville they should be united in that sacred place.

Mr. Belvington, now nearly restored to health, performed the ceremony; and as Elinor listened to the solemn service, which her father read in the most awfully-impressive manner, her spirits were nearly as much agitated as those of the bride; and again she firmly resolved upon informing her mother she could not, with Mortimer beside her, pronounce such solemn vows.

Caroline alone observed her agitation, and the tears rapidly coursed each other down her own cheek, as the thought of how

how short the time would probably be, ere she should hear her beloved sister pronounce those vows which would separate them from each other, perhaps for ever.

Clarenville's countenance was hidden from view by his arm, which rested against a monument, and shaded his face from observation.

Mr. and Mrs. Belvington accompanied the party back to Willowfield, where the bride and bridegroom breakfasted; and as soon as it was over, the carriage which was to convey lady Ormsby from her mother drove up to the door. Emma looked at her, as she heard the rattling of its wheels; and Elinor most truly wished the parting over, as she feared Mrs. Clarenville's fortitude would forsake her. The general hastily kissed his beloved child, and putting her into the arms of her mother, attempting a cheerful tone, though his voice trembled with agitation, said, "Only one embrace, and not

longer

longer than a minute." Mrs. Clarenville silently obeyed, and then beckoning sir Edward to take his lovely bride from her, fervently pressed their united hands, and motioned him to lead her darling child to the carriage.

This expressive, though silent command, sir Edward instantly complied with, without allowing his Emma to bid farewell to her other friends; but as he passed Elinor, he shook her by the hand, and said, "You will follow my example, I hope, very soon."

Clarenville, who was standing near, now hastily took his sister's other hand, and assisted her into the carriage. Upon returning to the drawing-room, he found it deserted by all except Mr. Belvington and his youngest daughter. The former soon challenged him to a game at chess; and Caroline saying her mother and sister were going to walk, left the chess-players to their amusement, though she pretty plainly

plainly saw it was far from being an agreeable one to the younger gentlemen, who would much rather have accompanied the pedestrians in the ramble.

"My dear mother," said Caroline, after they had proceeded some way on their walk, "did you ever see a more delightful old soul than our dear general? I declare the father is infinitely superior to the son; and to own the truth, I am desperately in love with him."

"So did your mother fancy herself before you," replied Mrs. Belvington, half-smiling.

"My dear mother, why did you not inform me of this before the general came to Willowfield? I would have given worlds to have been present when you first met; but do pray tell me now all about it; there is nothing I enjoy so much as the history of an old flirtation. I made lady Egerton give me the whole account of one of hers the other day;

so

so come, dear mother, tell me how and where you were first struck—in short, the whole story from beginning to end."

"The whole story, my dear Caroline," replied Mrs. Belvington, "is so much to the disadvantage of your mother, that she has hitherto shrunk from the recital; and even your father was not acquainted with it till Alfred Clarenville first visited Rosebrook. But as it may perhaps be a lesson to you not to trifle with the affections of an amiable man, I will relate the history of my errors in this affair, and trust you will profit by the recital.

"I had just entered my seventeenth year, when general, then major Clarenville, accompanied my brother (your late uncle Charles) into Monmouthshire, where you have heard me say my father resided on his living of Hazelmere. His mode of life was very secluded; and I believe I may say, major Clarenville was the only young man, my brother alone excepted,

excepted, who was ever admitted under his roof.

"I was but just returned, for the last time, from school, when our visitors arrived. Major Clarenville had not seen me for some years, and, my brother informed me, professed himself much pleased with the improvement that interval had made in my person.

"It was not long before I discovered the partial sentiments he entertained for me; and it is not very wonderful that the attentions of so handsome and elegant a young man, the first too from whom I had ever received any, should prove highly gratifying to me; nor that when I heard from himself his affections were fixed upon me, I should fancy his partiality was as warmly returned; and when questioned by my father on the state of my heart, I asserted, what I firmly believed to be true, that it was sincerely and unalterably attached to major Clarenville.

"With

"With the cordial approbation of our mutual friends, we were soon after engaged to each other; and when the time for his quitting Hazelmere arrived, it was agreed our union should take place early in the following spring. The winter I was invited by his mother to spend with her and her daughter at their residence in town; and major Clarenville joined his family there whenever he could procure leave of absence.

"The season was now more than half advanced, when his mother was suddenly obliged to leave town to attend her sister, who was dying, and ardently wished to see her and her niece before she expired.

"I had previously formed an acquaintance with a family who were upon very friendly terms with the Clarenvilles. One member of it was a young girl, nearly of my own age. Eliza Weldon had professed herself much attached to me, and I was now invited to pass the inter-

val

val of my friend's absence from town with her; and about the same time that I accompanied her home, major Clarenville's regiment was ordered to a distant part of the kingdom.

"Mr. Montague and your father were introduced to me upon my arrival at Mrs. Weldon's. They were intimate friends of her son; and the former being at that time a great favourite with Eliza, she requested her brother to bring him and his inseparable companion to the house as often as possible. Scarcely a day now passed without great part of it being spent by them at Mrs. Weldon's; your father and I were frequently left to entertain each other, as Eliza generally contrived to engross the whole attention of Mr. Montague; and I too soon found the heart which I had fancied in the possession of major Clarenville, was now seriously and wholly devoted to my comparatively-new acquaintance.

"Your father, who knew not of my pre-engagement,

pre-engagement, was surprised by my friend into a confession of his attachment to me, which she drew from him in an unguarded moment. Eliza also discovered my engagement was now an unwilling one, and too soon succeeded in convincing me it might very easily be broken off; that it was in fact an act of justice towards major Clarenville. In short, she persuaded me to write to him, and entreat that he would free me from it, as my heart no longer bore a share in it.

"Not a moment did he hesitate, but released me immediately from my promise, and thanked me for my sincerity towards him, as my happiness was infinitely dearer to him than his own; but the distraction of mind apparent in this generous resignation, and the recollection of his pale and altered countenance when we accidentally met a few weeks after, embittered many an hour subsequent to my marriage with your father, which would otherwise

otherwise have passed in happiness unalloyed.

"Major Clarenville's feelings were deeply wounded by my inconstancy, and I fear I was the cause of many years of unhappiness to him, as it was not until the year following my dear Cecilia's birth, that I heard of his having sufficiently overcome his attachment to acquiesce in the wishes of his friends, in uniting himself to his present wife, who has fully compensated to him for my unjustifiable fickleness; and this union has sufficiently proved that much happiness may be enjoyed in the connubial state, even when entered into without that violent love some think necessary to ensure it.

"My conduct, of course, made a complete breach between the families, though lady Neville, I believe, continued to entertain the same warmth of regard for me she had ever done; but she conformed to the wishes of her mother in never either seeing or inquiring for me;

me; and before her return to London, my friend Eliza had quitted it for an excursion to Scotland with a young ensign, whose addresses she had encouraged on finding Mr. Montague's heart continued impenetrable; and her husband's regiment being immediately ordered abroad, she accompanied him thither; and soon falling a victim to the climate, every trace of me was lost; and I never again saw my early friend lady Neville until she arrived at Willowfield, and the first meeting between her brother and myself since that time I mentioned was on the day of Elinor's return."

"I cannot think," cried Caroline, as her mother paused, "how you were able to meet with such calmness as you appeared to do."

"It was only apparently, I rather suspect," returned Mrs. Belvington; "I believe we neither of us felt too comfortable during the first half-hour."

Every word of her mother's little history

tory fell like a bolt of ice on the heart of Elinor. She was now convinced lady Egerton was mistaken in her opinion of Mrs. Belvingon's sentiments being the same as her own relative to her child's engagement.

If she thus condemned her own conduct, would she not equally, if not more severely, disapprove of her daughter's pursuing the same course, particularly as the excuse of extreme youth could not in this instance be pleaded? Her own fate was then irrevocably fixed; she had gone too far to recede, and from this time she must consider herself as the destined wife of Mortimer; for no longer did she dare to think of acknowledging, even to her mother, how much her heart was averse to the union.

Her thoughts were employed in painful retrospection during the remainder of her walk. Caroline continued to converse with her mother; and having extended their ramble far beyond their original

ginal intention, they were obliged to separate, immediately on their return to the house, to prepare for dinner, to which the families of Beechgrove and Edgewold were invited.

CHAPTER VII.

"My dear Elinor," said Caroline, as she turned from the glass, after finishing her toilet, "though I acknowledge the pensive attitude you have chosen a very becoming one, yet it will never assist you in being in readiness for dinner, to which we shall be summoned in a quarter of an hour."

"Surely you must be mistaken, Caroline," replied her sister, starting from the reverie she had been unconsciously indulging since she entered her dressing-

room; I am certain we have not yet returned from our walk that time."

"You cannot persuade me I have been so very expeditious in dressing, Elinor, when I had every pin to put in, and every string to tie myself—nay, do not blush so terribly, my dear sister, I am not going to bear malice, and leave you in the same predicament; but indeed you must be a little more expeditious, or we shall have the whole house in alarm at our non-appearance in the drawing-room, where our sister Coleridge is already, I imagine, as her carriage is now driving from the door."

Elinor, as quickly possible, dispatched her toilet, and then proceeded with her sister to Mrs. Clarenville's dressing-room, where they found the general, who was reading to his wife the beautiful tragedy of Tancred and Sigismunda; and making a sign to the sisters that he had nearly finished the scene, he went on with these concluding lines:—

"Have

"Have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares—from helpless years
Thy tenderness for me?—an eye still beam'd
With love?—a brow that never knew a frown,
Nor a harsh word thy tongue? Shall I for these
Repay thy stooping, venerable age
With shame, disquiet, anguish, and dishonour?
It must not be! Thou first of angels! come,
Sweet filial Piety! and firm my breast;
Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit—
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy."

Elinor started at these words; her cheek grew pale; and fearing her change of countenance would be observed, she walked to an open window, hoping the air would relieve the violent oppression, which produced a suffocating sensation.

Her emotion had not passed unnoticed by the penetrating Caroline, who endeavoured to call the attention of her companions from her sister, as she saw the general's eye followed this movement of Elinor's. In some measure she succeeded; and when Mrs. Clarenville said

 she

she was ready to accompany them to the drawing-room, her sister's countenance, as she turned from the window, and put her arm into that of the general's, had recovered its usual serenity.

The appearance of the young and lovely bridemaids excited universal admiration. Elinor, that her dress might entirely correspond with her young sister's, had forborne adding any ornament to it, except a beautiful pearl necklace, which the bride had presented to her at the same time she gave a similar one to Caroline.

The elegant simplicity of these plain, though delicate muslin dresses, adorned only with a small bouquet of myrtle, and the striking contrast of Caroline's animated countenance to the pensive character of Elinor's that day, drew, even from the generally grave and reserved Mr. Egerton, the warmest expressions of admiration.

All of Clarenville's was directed towards

wards Elinor, and he was approaching to address some trifling observation to her as an excuse for entering into conversation, when she suddenly withdrew her arm from that of the general, and advancing to her friend Mrs. Wardley, whilst a deep blush suffused her lovely countenance, inquired, in a faltering voice, if the time of major Mortimer's return was fixed?

Clarenville started as he overheard this question; and retreating to the other end of the room, began, in a hurried manner, making inquiries of Mr. Coleridge relative to the jaunt, which the latter had informed him it was his and Mrs. Coleridge's intention to join in.

When the party were seated at dinner, Caroline perceived Elinor had changed the station she usually occupied between the general and his son, for one by her brother Willoughby and colonel Wardley, and avoided, as much as possible, looking to the opposite side of

the table, where she herself was sitting between Mr. Egerton and Clarenville. The latter was now even more taciturn than his usually-silent friend, who, to the surprise of Caroline, began to enter into conversation with her almost immediately after he had placed himself by her side.

General Clarenville could scarcely refrain from laughing, as Caroline now and then directed an arch look of surprise towards him; lady Neville was highly entertained at this wonder; and even Mrs. Clarenville could not forbear smiling at the glances Caroline occasionally gave her. Elinor's eye she could never succeed in catching; she appeared to be always deeply engaged in attending to colonel Wardley. Willoughby now and then joined in their conversation; but as it was chiefly concerning the time passed in India by the former, he was, like Elinor, more an attentive listener than a speaker.

Caroline

Caroline frequently caught the name of Mortimer, and she suspected one, not very distant from her, was equally quick of hearing, as he every succeeding moment became more silent; and when the dessert was placed on the table, his only entertainment appeared to be in cutting his fruit into small pieces, and piling them up on each other several stories high; then, when the unstable foundation gave way, he would recommence his employment with the same industry as before.

At length, unable longer to continue silent, she, in a low voice, said to him—"What an excellent mason was spoiled when fate decreed you an idle gentleman!"

Clarenville attempted to laugh, and Caroline was continuing to rally him upon his talent for masonry, and assuring him his materials were as frail as those she was in the habit of building with, when she was summoned by lady

Neville to retire with her other female guests to the drawing-room, where Elinor was kept a close prisoner by Mr. Wardley till the gentlemen joined them.

Caroline made room for her favourite general Clarenville, between herself and lady Egerton. The servants now entered with coffee for the gentlemen; and whilst the general was deeply engaged in relating a military anecdote to his old friend, Caroline, willing to try if his attention was entirely engrossed by the recollection of his youthful days, lifted his cup of coffee from the saucer to her own lips, and after drinking the contents, restored it to its former station, unperceived by the general.

His son and Mr. Egerton had, however, observed the trick, and much amused by it, were anxiously watching for what would follow.

General Clarenville having finished his interesting little tale, was preparing to take

take his coffee, when he discovered the liquid had already vanished. The look of surprise that passed across his countenance was almost too much for Caroline's gravity to sustain; the general putting his empty cup on the tray, took a fresh one, and turning towards her, smiling, said, "Did you ever know any thing equal to my absence of mind? Would you believe it? I really was not aware I had touched my coffee, till I saw the cup was completely emptied."

"Are you certain, my dear sir," cried Clarenville, unable longer to refrain from laughing, "are you quite certain you really did drink it? is it not possible," he continued, as Caroline eagerly made him a sign of silence, "a little magic may have been employed to convey it from you? You remember seeing the other day what magical effects music produced; something of the same sort may have been exercised here."

"I have often heard of magical mu-

sic," said colonel Wardley, "from the officers of my regiment, but have never seen any of the wonderful effects ascribed to it."

"Have you not?" cried Caroline, starting from her seat; "then my sister and I will give you a specimen of them. I will play, Elinor," she continued, "if you will perform the part of magician."

Elinor felt herself very unequal to the office assigned her; she offered to be the musician, but Caroline appeared resolved not to indulge her; she was therefore, though very unwillingly, obliged to comply, and left the room, whilst the company agreed upon the object she was to carry to her sister, who, seated at the pianoforte, soon struck up a march, and the general opening the door, requested Elinor to enter.

Elinor had proceeded nearly round the apartment, looking at and examining every thing in it as she advanced. Caroline still continued playing in the

same

same loud key, till she approached that part of the room where Clarenville was sitting; a slight difference in the sound now made her hesitate; the nearer she approached Clarenville's chair, the less distinctly were Caroline's notes heard. Her eye now caught a miniature picture, which was hanging on the wall near him; she reached out her hand for it, and again Caroline, with a suppressed laugh, struck the keys in a louder tone. It now suddenly darted across Elinor's mind, her sister had fixed on Clarenville himself as the proof to convince colonel Wardley there was magic in her sweet sounds. Her ear, naturally a good one, now appeared to have lost all sense of hearing; in vain did her sister, with open pedal, strike the instrument each moment louder and louder; Elinor continued to retreat from the vicinity of Clarenville, till at length, blushing and confused, she approached her sister, and said—"You had

better let me take your part, Caroline, as I am so terribly dull this evening I can make nothing of mine, and my stupidity spoils the whole effect of the plot."

"You are indeed, Elinor," returned her sister, laughing, "most unaccountably dull of hearing to-night;" then springing from her seat, "you ought, and shall be punished for it too. Look here!" and turning towards Clarenville, who had now approached, she took the cup he held in his hand from him, and continued, "look here, you terribly wooden-eared mortal! could you not discover it was this excellent cup of coffee I wanted you to bring me, and which I intended to have drank? but now, as you chose to spoil it, by allowing me to wait till it has become cold, you shall, for a punishment, drink it yourself."

"Impossible, Caroline!" cried the highly-confused Elinor; "I cannot indeed; you know how much I dislike coffee."

"Indeed

"Indeed I know nothing of the matter; besides, if what you say is true, which I very much doubt, your punishment will, even then, be no greater than you deserve."

General Clarenville was now advancing to protect his favourite from her sister's raillery, when Mr. Egerton hastily said—"Indeed, Miss Belvington, you ought not to resist; your sister played with so much expression she has a right to award you some punishment for inattention."

Elinor, ashamed of the notice she had excited, and willing to put an end to the dispute, now raised the cup to her lips, and then immediately turning to the instrument, and continuing the same air which had been so unsuccessful with her, colonel Wardley requested Caroline would endeavour to give him a better idea of this manœuvre than her sister had done.

"You shall be gratified immediately," returned

returned Caroline; "but first let me return Mr. Clarenville his coffee; if it is not sweet enough," she continued, addressing the latter, "there stands the sugar-bason; your taste may be different from Elinor's; she appeared to think the draught a very nauseous one. And now I am gone, only let me entreat you, good folk, before I leave the room, not to take quite so long to decide as you did the last time."

"I really think," said the general, smiling, when the door had closed after her, "we shall now have a fair opportunity of puzzling Caroline, if Mr. Egerton has no objection to our making him the object for her to discover."

Mr. Egerton assured him he had not the slightest; and immediately going towards the door, opened it, and informed the fair magician every thing was ready for her appearance.

Caroline now bounded forward; and as she proceeded round the room, fixed

her

her penetrating eyes on every person, as well as thing, she passed; but perceiving no alteration in her sister's playing, she continued her progress till she arrived opposite Mr. Egerton, who had remained stationary at the door he had opened for her, his hand still resting on the lock.

Caroline now plainly discovered the instrument was losing its loud tone; she raised her eyes to Mr. Egerton's; his were fixed, with a look of impenetrable gravity, upon her; she started, and involuntarily turned from him. Elinor's notes again sounded more distinctly, and again Caroline turned towards Mr. Egerton, around whose mouth she observed something like a smile playing. Quickly now advancing to her sister, and touching her arm, she exclaimed—"How could you, my dear Elinor, think of employing my wonderful talents on such an insignificant, diminutive object as the one yonder?" pointing as she spoke to the tall, towering figure of Mr. Egerton, who,

struck

struck with the ridiculous contrast of what he really was to the Lilliputian Caroline had so gravely portrayed him, to the astonishment of all, now burst into so hearty a laugh, no one, except Caroline (who was overpowered with surprise at the phenonemon), could forbear joining in it.

As soon as it had a little subsided, she turned to her sister, and in a low voice said—"This plan was your revengeful suggestion, I suspect."

"No, indeed," returned Elinor, hastily, fearing, from Clarenville's near vicinity, he had overheard what she said; "I assure you I had nothing to do in it; if you are angry with any one, it must be with your favourite general."

Mr. Egerton, who had again recovered his usual gravity, now advanced, and offering his hand to Caroline, with a grave and solemn bow, said—"If you are not apprehensive of the benumbing touch of a *Torpedo*, will you allow me to conduct

conduct you back to the chair you lately quitted?"

Caroline, too much confused to reply, cast a reproachful glance at Clarenville, who, she felt convinced, had betrayed her, and silently gave her hand to Mr. Egerton, who, leading her to a chair next his own, and taking a cup of coffee from a tray lady Neville had desired the servant to leave, he presented it to her, assuring her she would find it full as good as the one her sister had deprived her of; and then seating himself beside her, inquired if she yet found any ill effects from that baleful animal's touch, while Caroline's blushing cheek plainly evinced her blood was still in quick circulation.

General Clarenville now called upon Mrs. Wardley for some of his favourite songs, which he had been accustomed to hear her sing before she went to India. Caroline, who had a remarkably sweet and powerful voice, was also prevailed on to give a specimen of her powers.

Mr.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARA

Mr. Coleridge had been her chief instructor, and his pupil was allowed to do him great credit. Elinor could not be prevailed on to join in their harmony, but remained an attentive listener to their performance. Clarenville perceived her manner towards him was changed, yet he could not find in what that difference consisted; she still answered him, when he addressed her, with the same sweetness of manner; yet there was something wanting in the tone which he could not define, yet most forcibly felt.

Elinor's feelings were not more tranquil, but her resolution was now fixed, and she determined upon not giving way to them; yet never had the hours, while at Willowfield, passed so heavily as they had done that evening, and she felt not a little relieved when the time arrived in which she could lay her aching head on her pillow, and relieve her heart by a salutary burst of tears; yet she dared not inquire of herself why she

wept

wept so bitterly, though she still continued to do so. At length her thoughts became more composed, for she had offered up a fervent prayer for fortitude and resignation under her lot, and soon after, fatigued by the exertions of the day, she sunk into a profound repose.

CHAPTER VIII.

Colonel Wardley made his appearance at Willowfield on the following morning, and inquiring for Elinor, was shewn into the breakfast-parlour, where the family were assembled. He came with an invitation for her to return with him, and spend the day at Edgewold; but Elinor would not leave Mrs. Clarenville, and begged him to excuse her declining it, but added, she hoped her friend Eliza would spend some time with her when she returned to Rosebrook.

"I can

"I can answer for her willingly complying with your request," replied the colonel, smiling, "provided you have not by that time forgotten your old friends."

"I trust Eliza does not think me of so very ungrateful a disposition," said Elinor, earnestly.

"Oh no; she has a high opinion of your constancy; indeed she is so truly persuaded you are of the same genus as the turtle-dove, that she has sent you this letter, fully thinking, I really believe, the sight will set you off cooing immediately;" and as he spoke, he put a letter from Mortimer into her hand.

It was the first he had ever addressed to Elinor, as when he left Willowfield, her illness had prevented his requesting her to correspond with him during his absence, and he had therefore entreated Mrs. Belvington to send him frequent accounts of his beloved Elinor's health. His wish had been punctually complied with; but Mrs. Belvington had not, till

her

her last letter, informed him of her daughter's perfect recovery, as she hoped, from the conversation lady Egerton had informed her had passed between Elinor and herself, the former would have followed the advice this revered friend had given her, and that she should herself, ere long, be fully acquainted with the state of her child's heart. But day after day passing by without any reference being made to the subject, Mrs. Belvington was at length obliged to withdraw the interdict she had laid upon Mortimer, of not addressing any letter to Elinor, who, she could no longer deny, was now quite restored to health, and he had immediately availed himself of this permission.

Elinor took the letter from colonel Wardley with a blushing cheek and trembling hand; but she had not forgotten the resolutions formed on her pillow; and when the colonel left the house soon after, she opened it in the room, and at the

the same time the rest of the family did theirs, as the servant had just entered with the bag.

Mortimer's epistle contained only a repetition of those expressions he was in the habit of using when conversing with Elinor, to whom he appeared sincerely attached. After reading it, she determined upon immediately answering it, whilst the sentiments of gratitude her professions of regard had excited were still vivid in her mind; but as she arose to leave the room for that purpose, a question from lady Neville obliging her to turn round, she caught the eye of Clarenville, and the expression it conveyed to her heart made her colour vary, and her whole frame tremble; but she exerted herself sufficiently to answer lady Neville with tolerable steadiness, and then hastily retreated to her dressing-room, and bolting the door, threw the letter she had received from Mortimer on the table,

ble, and sinking on a chair near it, covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"Oh Mortimer!" she at length mentally exclaimed, "it shall be my earnest endeavour to return your too-partial regard; but I never, never can answer your expressions of it with the warmth I know they deserve. Why, my dearest mother, why have you placed an inseparable bar to the confession I intended making? but even if you had not," she continued, starting from her seat, and pacing the room in the greatest agitation, "I cannot, ought not, to recede from the promise I gave my father. Did I not tell him his recovery was alone wanting to complete my happiness? and shall I, by retracting my words, run the hazard of again bringing my beloved parent to the brink of the grave, having been assured any powerful emotion would most probably produce another dreadful attack?"

The words of the tragedy general Clarenville had the day before been reading again recurred to her mind; and as every feeling of her heart was wound up to an enthusiastic pitch, she involuntarily repeated—

> ——"Thou first of angels! come,
> Sweet filial Piety! and firm my breast;
> Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit—
> Be nobly wretched—but her father happy."

And now, while her filial enthusiasm was at its height, Elinor sat down to her desk, and replied to Mortimer's letter. She could not, nor would attempt to assure him his partiality was returned, but she expressed her gratitude for the sentiments he entertained for her; and her firmness augmenting as she advanced in her task, she proceeded to assure him, whenever he called upon her for the fulfilment of the promise given to her father and himself, he should find her ready to perform it; then, without ventur-

ing

ing to cast her eyes over the contents, Elinor hastily sealed and directed the letter; and now determined no longer to give way to unavailing reflections, she resolutely employed herself in preparing for her journey to S——, as lady Neville intended, after an early dinner, proceeding thither that afternoon.

The Rosebrook party were to follow them early in the ensuing week; and, late in the evening, Elinor found herself in possession of a pleasant apartment, the windows of which overlooked the sea, in the gay town of S——.

At the usual hour lady Neville and her friends proceeded to the promenade, now much thronged with fashionables of all descriptions. Both lady Neville and Mrs. Clarenville soon recognised several of their London acquaintances; but to Elinor every face was strange. Much entertained with the gaiety and novelty of the passing scene, she was making inquiries of her companion, general Claren-

ville, concerning many of the most remarkable figures as they passed, when the tones of a voice, perfectly familiar to her ear, exclaiming, "I am certain it can be no other than Miss Belvington," made her hastily turn round, and she perceived George Fitzmorton forcing his way to her side through all impeding obstacles, and who now delightedly expressed his joy at again meeting her.

Elinor had not forgotten his behaviour during their last interview, but the recollection of it seemed entirely to have faded from George's memory. He hastened to inform her of his having now a third amiable sister, whom he appeared to admire full as much as his own, desired her to congratulate him on this acquisition, and then informed her the bride and bridegroom, with his eldest sister and his *bane*, Miss Marsden, were now at S——.

"I hope you will be at the rooms on Monday," he continued; "the elegant

and accomplished lady Harriet Fitzmorton appears there in the character of bride. By-the-bye, you cannot imagine what a rage I put her in the other day, by telling her, that though I acknowledged her steps were very fine, yet her dancing was not to be compared to yours on the evening of the Lesford ball. You have not forgotten that delightful dance, have you?—Pray how is the nice old widow at Ashgrove? is she quite well? and has Montague performed the promise he made concerning her? But see, there is the bride, looking as affected as ever—does she not? Why wont you answer me? I don't think you are even attending."

"Indeed I am," returned Elinor, laughing; "but you have really put so many questions, I was lost in considering which I should first reply to."

A gentleman now beckoning George, he exclaimed—"There is my tiresome uncle waiting for me, so I must leave

 you;

you; but answer me one of my questions before I go—shall you be at the ball next week?"

"I really at present do not know whether lady Neville intends going."

"If you accompany her there, will you dance the two first dances with me, as you did at Lesford?"

Elinor hesitated a moment, but at length replied—"Indeed you must excuse me."

George, surprised, looked angrily towards her for a moment, till recollecting the cause of the confusion he observed, he recovered his good humour, and laughingly returned—"Oh, you need not be afraid; that nonsense of my father's is all over now; he has heard from Montague of your engagement; therefore you may oblige me if you will."

Elinor blushed deeply as she saw Clarenville was attentively listening to this conversation, and George was obliged to repeat his request before he could obtain

a reply

a reply; when, satisfied with having secured her hand for the first set, he left her to join his uncle.

Lady Neville now proposed returning home, and the party had nearly reached their lodgings, when Elinor again heard her name mentioned by some one near her, and in another moment Mr. Montague was at her side.

"My dear Elinor!" he exclaimed, after shaking hands with the rest of the party, "you are the last person I should ever have expected to see at S——, not having the slightest idea you would prefer at this time of your life the gaiety of a watering-place to the romantic and inviting *tête-à-tête* walks around Rosebrook."

"Is Mrs. Montague with you?" said Elinor, blushing, and anxious to call his attention from herself.

"You do not suppose I should be cruel enough to leave her in solitude at Ash-

 grove?

grove? But now tell me how your father, my old friend and cousin, is."

Elinor informed him of her father's expected arrival early in the week, with her mother, &c. and then inquired where she should find Mrs. Montague?

"With her friend lady Wallingforth, at —— hotel, where she will be most happy to see you. Miss Fitzmorton also is with her; and this information, I know, will heighten the pleasure you are now going to tell me you will have in again seeing Mrs. Montague."

Lady Neville now inquired if they should find Mrs. Montague at home that morning?

"I rather think not," he replied. "To-morrow, after service, she has generally a levee; but as I know you had rather not make one amongst them on that day, suppose you allow me to say, on Monday she may expect the pleasure of your company."

This

This being agreed to, Mr. Montague took his leave, and the rest of that day, and the following, after they had attended church, were passed in quiet seclusion by the Willowfield party, Clarenville excepted, who, having been recognised by some of his friends, was obliged to accept their invitation, and Elinor saw no more of him till they met at breakfast in the morning, when his manner towards her was even more reserved than her own had been since the day of Emma's marriage; and immediately after the conclusion of the meal, he again left the house.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Clarenville and Elinor paid their promised visit to Mrs. Montague on the Monday, but their call was made at too early an hour for that lady to be visible; and

on their return home they received intelligence of the arrival of the Rosebrook party at their lodgings, whither lady Neville had been gone some time.

Elinor and her companion were not long in following her, and the former had the satisfaction of finding her father much less fatigued with his journey than she had dared to hope.

When Caroline met her sister, she was half wild with delight, for lady Neville had obtained Mr. Belvington's permission for her to accompany the party to the rooms that evening—"And would you believe it, my dear Elinor," she exclaimed, "Mr. Egerton (I dare no longer call him the Torpedo) has already requested me to dance the two first dances with him; I am dying with curiosity to see his performance—will it not be most truly ludicrous? I am afraid he will be but a stupid partner; yet I dared not refuse him when he asked me, for there is something in his eyes, whenever he

looks

looks at me, ever since Mr. Clarenville betrayed to him my likening him to a torpedo, that makes me unable to answer any question of his with more than a monosyllable; and unfortunately, this time, before I was aware of it, I answered him with an affirmative instead of a negative, as was my full intention."

"But," returned Elinor, "what excuse could you have given for a refusal? you would not surely have had the courage to plead a pre-engagement?"

"No, no; I am not yet quite so courageous on that point; but I meant to have told him I did not intend dancing at all, which really is the fact, although you look so incredulous; I should have had as much pleasure again in remarking and quizzing all the odd-looking folk; but you must promise to stand next me, and then I shall not feel quite so afraid of Mr. Egerton."

"Afraid of Mr. Egerton!" cried Elinor, "now you indeed surprise me, Caroline;

roline; he would be very much flattered if I were to repeat to him what you say, as he certainly is the first person you ever felt that sensation for."

"But pray don't be so mischievous," said Caroline, hastily. "Your friend, Mr. Clarenville, has already spoiled half my sport by repeating my wit; and I shall go melancholy mad if I am obliged to be on my guard as to every word I utter, for fear of its being repeated again."

"Well, my dear Caroline," returned Elinor, laughing, "don't look quite so uneasy; I am not going to betray you to Mr. Egerton; but forgive me for adding, I must think he is a most wonderful creature, to make you look so completely unlike yourself as you did a moment ago."

"How saucy you are grown, Elinor! any one, according to your account, would think we had changed characters. But pray tell me, what has become of another

another wonderful animal—what have you done with Mr. Clarenville?"

"I have not seen him since breakfast," said Elinor, turning from the arch look of her sister; "and as he did not then mention his engagements for the morning, I am not able to inform you what he has done with himself."

"But I dare say you can tell me if he is going to the ball this evening, and whether he has not engaged you for the two first dances?"

"The first of your questions I am unable to answer," returned Elinor; "to the second I can reply, that though I am engaged for the first set, it is not to Mr. Clarenville; and now, if you have finished your catechism, we had better return to our friends, who are waiting for us to walk."

"You are the very person I have been unsuccessfully inquiring for," said Caroline, as she shook hands with Clarenville, who met her as she entered the room;

 "Elinor

"Elinor has assured me, she neither knows nor cares what you intend doing with yourself this evening. Now do not allow your vanity to be too much raised by my apparent anxiety to seek information on the subject, nor fancy it is intended as a hint for you to ask me to dance at the ball, where my dear good papa has given me leave to go. You may, without fear, safely answer whether you intend making one of the party."

"Is it possible I can absent myself," he smilingly returned, "after hearing who is to grace it with her presence?"

"This is all very fine," said Caroline, laughing and shaking her head; "but you had better have directed such a compliment to Elinor; she is more accustomed to hearing these kind of expressions, and therefore knows how to answer them with a much better grace than I can ever expect to attain to."

"I doubt much," said Clarenville, half-smiling, "whether Miss Belvington would

would have condescended to answer me at all; it is not every man who must expect such an honour."

Elinor turned away her blushing cheek, and addressed Mr. Egerton, who had now joined them.

"But seriously," continued Clarenville, addressing Caroline, "if you are going to the ball this evening, may I hope for the pleasure of dancing with you the two first dances?"

"When I inform you," she replied, "I am already engaged to Mr. Egerton, you will perhaps be convinced I was sincere in assuring you, my inquiry relative to your accompanying us was dictated by simple curiosity, and not intended as a hint."

"But, my dear sister," said Elinor, "your engagement with Mr. Egerton will terminate at the conclusion of the first set."

"Certainly," replied Caroline; "the same as yours will with your partner. But

But what of that? Even did I intend dancing the next set, Mr. Clarenville has no intention of asking me to dance them with him;" and as she spoke she cast an arch glance towards him.

"Is Mr. Egerton then," said Clarenville, colouring, but endeavouring to laugh off his confusion, "to be the only happy man? must not I presume to enter the lists with my friend?"

"I assure you," cried Caroline, blushing a little in her turn, "two dances are all I intend venturing upon this evening; but when we return to Rosebrook, I will dance with you, if you wish it, every day, either in the parlour or the great barn."

Elinor now inquired of lady Neville if she were ready to commence her walk?

"I have only been waiting for you and your sister," replied her ladyship, "and having overheard something about dancing, and concluding the gentlemen were contesting for the honour of your fair

hands,

hands, I would not be so cruel as to interrupt them before the affair was settled; but now, if it is finished, we had better be going, and allow your father a little repose after his fatigue."

Mrs. Coleridge had brought her eldest boy and girl with her to S——, and they now requested leave to accompany their aunts in their walk. Caroline could refuse nothing to her favourite niece, and the little Edward so earnestly entreated permission to go with his dear aunt Elinor, that his mother at length withdrew the negative she had given, as after his journey she much feared he would soon feel tired; but Clarenville promising to return with him directly he perceived any symptoms of fatigue, Mrs. Coleridge consented to the child's request.

Edward was a very delicate, interesting child; his health had, from infancy, been very indifferent; but the patience with which the sweet little fellow bore all his ailments, had extremely endeared

him

him to Elinor; and she was in return the decided favourite of her nephew.

The girl was a perfect contrast to her brother — the picture of health and strength, with spirits equal to Caroline's, to whom she was much attached; and it would perhaps be difficult to say, whether the aunt or niece most enjoyed the frequent game of romps they had together.

As they proceeded in their walk, Mr. Egerton invited the little girl to take his hand, but the child shrunk from him, and Caroline could not, by any means in her power, induce her little niece to accept his offer. Mr. Egerton coloured as he observed the child's apparent dread of him, and then with a smile said—" It is astonishing how very far the benumbing influence of the Torpedo extends! I am more than half-inclined to quarrel with dame Nature for giving me so repulsive a phiz."

Caroline blushed deeply at this observation;

vation; but as it was apparently addressed to her sister, she wisely pretended not to have overheard it.

Elinor soon perceived little Edward's spirits were beyond his strength; though fearful of being separated from his favourite aunt, he would not allow that he felt himself fatigued, till upon her assuring him she would return also, he confessed "his legs did feel a little tired."

Caroline was going back with her sister, but Mrs. Clarenville advised her continuing her walk, or her little charge might also be fatigued; and then smiling, added—"As Alfred is not her only beau, your sister will not be afraid of walking so short a distance with him."

General Clarenville was not at hand for Elinor to apply to, and she was therefore obliged to comply with Mrs. Clarenville's proposal.

Edward soon begged of Clarenville to carry him a little while, as he had often done at Rosebrook. Elinor endeavour-

ed

ed to persuade her nephew he could very well walk the rest of the way, but Clarenville would not allow of it; and taking the little fellow up in his arms, offered his support also to Elinor, who gently declined accepting it, and the silence remained unbroken till their arrival at Mr. Belvington's lodgings.

Mrs. Coleridge having expressed her gratitude to Clarenville for his kindness to her little boy, informed Elinor their mother and lady Egerton were gone to take a quiet stroll by themselves, and then offered to accompany her back to her party; but Elinor observing her sister looked much fatigued, would not allow of her doing it, and added, "she preferred remaining where she was, until her mother returned, whom she much wished to see."

Lady Egerton and Mrs. Belvington soon after entering, Clarenville took his leave, and Elinor had an hour's conversation with her mother before the return

turn of her party, when lady Neville requested permission to take Caroline home with her; and Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Egerton agreed to meet them at the rooms, Mrs. Coleridge having declined accompanying them.

Elinor had, in the course of the morning, observed her mother anxiously regarding her; and fearful she should read in her countenance what was passing in her heart, had exerted herself more than usual to remove any suspicions which conscience whispered it was too probable she might entertain. But Mrs. Belvington's maternal solicitude was not to be deceived; she plainly saw her beloved child was far from happy; her cheerfulness was so evidently forced, the very great pleasure she professed to feel from this little jaunt was so unlike her usual tranquil though lively mode of expression, and she so frequently assured her mother she was extremely happy, that Mrs. Belvington was certain happi-

ness in reality was a stranger to her bosom.

Elinor's eye had never before been unable to meet the mild, but penetrating one of her mother; and the latter was every moment more and more convinced something was materially wrong, and she determined, should her daughter not take advantage of the frequent opportunities they would now have for conversing together to reveal the state of her heart respecting Mortimer, she would entreat lady Egerton again to press their mutually-beloved Elinor to lay that heart open to her mother, before he returned to them and she had gone too far to recede.

CHAPTER X.

THE carriage was at length announced which was to convey the impatient Caroline

roline to the much wished-for ball. Elinor, as they proceeded to it, gently entreated her sister to restrain the great exuberance of spirits which every moment appeared to increase.

"One glance of the Torpedo," whispered Caroline, "will produce a much greater effect than all your exhortations."

"Take care," said Clarenville, who was conducting the sisters to the carriage, "that the gale does not convey those sounds where they ought not to be heard."

"If you will listen to all my remarks," returned Caroline, "pray don't be so malicious as to repeat them with your usual additions."

"I am truth and verity itself," replied Clarenville, laughing, "nor have ever taken away, or aught set down in malice."

He now assisted her into the carriage, and detaining Elinor a moment, said—

"You

"You are, I know, engaged the two first dances, but will you allow me to hope I may be more successful in my application for the two second?"

Clarenville felt the hand he held tremble within his own, as Elinor answered—"I should have been very happy to have danced them with you had I not been pre-engaged."

Clarenville bowed, and placed her in the carriage; he had, in her answer, remarked the same hesitation of manner with which she had refused a similar request from lord Petersbrook, and now felt assured he must, though unconsciously, have offended her. The evening he determined should not pass without an attempt at explanation—a favourable moment for which he resolved to watch for with the greatest diligence.

Mr. Coleridge and his companion were waiting to assist the party in alighting; Elinor eagerly seized her brother's arm,

and as they proceeded to the ball-room, whispered him—"Remember you are engaged to me the two second dances."

Mr. Coleridge smiled as he replied—"How honoured I ought to think myself by your making me so convenient a personage! but I will not forget my engagement, be assured."

George Fitzmorton soon caught sight of Elinor, as she followed lady Neville and her sister, who had taken the arm of Egerton, into the room. The dancing had not yet commenced, and Caroline, perfectly at her ease, was entertaining her companions by her droll remarks, when Elinor overheard a gentleman near them inquiring who those two extremely pretty girls were?

"I have seen one of them before," replied a female voice, which Elinor immediately recognised as lady Wallingforth's; "the tallest is that distant relation of Mr. Montague, whom you overheard Mr. Fitzmorton and myself laughing about

about at dinner to-day; she was a great flame of your nephew George when last at Ashgrove, and his brother has been giving me the most ridiculous account you ever heard of George's anger against poor Isabella, for hinting his *penchant* for this fair damsel to sir Charles."

"She is a very beautiful girl," returned the gentleman to whom this was addressed; "I suspect poor George has not been the only heart taken captive by her charms; a more lovely creature I scarcely ever saw."

"Yes, she is well enough for a rural divinity, as Fitzmorton's favourite expression is; and I think I have understood she has made some young ensign or captain, I forget which, her slave, and intends, in return for the mischief she has done, to assist in carrying his knapsack."

"I am very sorry to hear such is to be her lot," returned the gentleman; "she looks much too delicate for hard service."

Elinor lost her ladyship's answer by

George

George Fitzmorton's informing her the dance was beginning, and she hastened with Caroline to join the set.

They had both gone down it once, and Caroline had whispered Elinor the Torpedo performed wonders, when, as they were again taking their places in it, the former, catching her sister by the arm, exclaimed—" Elinor, have you seen who has just entered the room? Surely it can be no other than Mortimer!"

" Mortimer!" repeated Elinor, with a violent start. " Gracious Heaven! can it be possible?"

" I will not dispute the impossibility," returned Caroline, " but that yonder he is, now speaking to general Clarenville, you will not, I think, attempt to deny."

It was indeed Mortimer, who now leaving the general, approached Clarenville, and stretched out his hand as usual towards him.

" What a cordial manner that pledge

 of

of friendship is received with!" continued Caroline, laughing, as she observed Clarenville slightly touch, and almost immediately drop the offered hand.

Elinor, sick at heart, involuntarily walked away towards her place in the dance; Caroline soon followed her, and in another moment whispered—"Mortimer has discovered you;" and before she could add more, he was at their side. Elinor now, with a desperate resolution, held out her hand to him, and was proceeding to express her surprise at seeing him, when she perceived Clarenville leaning, almost motionless, against a pillar, his eyes fixed upon her.

Mortimer did not observe the change in Elinor's countenance, as he was engaged in answering Caroline's numerous interrogations relative to his surprising them by this sudden appearance, and she almost angrily continued—"Why did you write my mother it would not be

in your power to revisit Hampshire before the end of a fortnight at least, and then return to us so unexpectedly?"

Mortimer listened to her with his usual patience, and when she had finished, replied—"My business in town is not yet completed; but finding my presence might be dispensed with for three days, I determined on joining you at S——, where I had learnt from your sister I should most probably find you; and for this purpose I left London this morning at break of day, and have not been arrived at S—— more than a quarter of an hour. But, Elinor," he continued, catching her hand, "I am certain you are not well; surely you had better not dance any more at present."

Caroline had also perceived the death-like paleness of her sister's countenance, and now joined in Mortimer's entreaties to allow him to lead her to a seat. Elinor, finding herself unable to stand, at length complied with their request;

but Mortimer unluckily fixing upon one near the pillar, against which Clarenville was leaning, did not tend to restore her composure; and she entreated him to lead her nearer a window, which was at the other end of the room.

"You will dance the next two dances with me?" said Mortimer, when he saw her a little recovered; "I have seen Coleridge, and he has promised to yield up his claim; in the mean time, allow me to speak a few words on a more interesting subject. You cannot think how delighted I was to receive such a letter from you; the favourable sentiments it contained were far beyond what I deserve, or had dared to flatter myself you would ever have expressed for me. May I hope you will again confirm the promise you gave me in it, and that——"

"We had better defer this subject until to-morrow," said Elinor, interrupting him; "this is not a place to enter upon

it

it: do you not perceive those two ladies sitting near us? they must have overheard you."

Mortimer's eyes followed the direction Elinor's had taken: one of the ladies now turned round, and fixed her large black and piercing eyes upon them. He started most violently, slightly bowed, and then hastily rising, put Elinor's arm through his own, as, in an agitated tone of voice, he advised her to retire from the window, where the air blew so very strong upon her. Elinor would rather have remained where she was, had she been allowed a choice, but he hurried her quickly forward towards her sister, by whom George Fitzmorton was standing, and Elinor now added her apologies to those Caroline had already made for so unceremoniously quitting him before the conclusion of the dance.

George, glancing his eye across Mortimer, laughing, answered, the cause of her indisposition had been explained to

him by her sister; and then inquired if she were sufficiently recovered to resume her place in the dance?

Elinor silently gave him her hand, and they immediately joined the set. As she was going down it, her foot became entangled in the train of a lady near her; and turning to apologize for her awkwardness, she again encountered the black eyes, which, when sitting with Mortimer, had been fixed upon her. The graceful apology of Elinor was received in silence, and answered only by a haughty bow, while a ray of fire shot from the sparkling eye of the stranger.

For a moment Elinor felt overpowered by surprise; but recovering herself, though still wondering what this expressive look could mean, she continued the figure, and saw no more of the lady who engrossed all her thoughts, till having finished the dance, and retired with Caroline to a seat, the latter exclaimed—"I cannot conceive who that lady is

now

now so earnestly conversing with Mortimer; did you not remark her countenance, Elinor, when you begged her pardon for the accident her gown had, through you, sustained? The look she gave you in return brought those lines in lord Byron's 'Bride of Abydos' to my mind:—

'As the bolt bursts on high
  From the dark cloud that bound it,
Flash'd the soul of that eye
  From the long lashes round it.'

"The same idea struck me," said Mr. Egerton, "as I observed the haughty expression of that lady's countenance, which, from its peculiar contour, I suspect is an East-Indian one."

"Most probably," returned Caroline, "and as major Mortimer is himself but just returned from India, he has very likely in her recognised a former acquaintance; yet, if this is the case, I

think it was very strange he should not introduce her to you, Elinor, as I observed she was at one time seated at no great distance from Mortimer and yourself."

Caroline was now interrupted by perceiving Mr. and Mrs. Montague advancing towards them. The former would scarcely allow Elinor to address his wife before he exclaimed—"Allow me to congratulate you, my fair coz, on the restoration of your fine bloom, which, when I met you on Saturday, I was grieved to see had, except by fits and starts, entirely forsaken you. What a terrible havoc Caroline and you have made this evening in the hearts of all the beaux present! not one have I spoken to without hearing in return the inquiry, 'Who are those two lovely mortals, if mortals they are?' pointing at the same time to my fair relations. How proud was I in being able to answer, 'They are both cousins of mine!"

"Mere

"Mere country ones, I hope you added," said Caroline, laughing.

Elinor could not forbear smiling at this *mal-à-propos* speech; her sister was totally unconscious of the effect it produced on Mrs. Montague, whose colour evidently deepened, even through her rouge; and now endeavouring to turn the conversation, she began making numerous inquiries after the health of Mr. Belvington, whose illness, she assured Elinor, had very much distressed her.

Elinor, having answered all these questions, informed her both her parents were in town. Mrs. Montague expressed great pleasure at the idea of seeing them again, and saying she should take the earliest opportunity of calling at their lodgings, apologized for being obliged to leave her; but lady Wallingforth was in haste to return home, shook hands with the sisters, and gladly escaped from their society.

Mr. Montague whispered Elinor as he

passed her—"I have seen and congratulated my old friend Mortimer on his return to England, and the happy lot that awaits him;" then smiling at the blush he had called to her cheek, kissed his hand to her, and passed on with his wife.

"Will you not dance the two next dances?" said George Fitzmorton to Caroline.

"No, I will not indeed," she replied; "for the curiosity I came with is now completely gratified, and I shall not be sorry to return home again."

"An opportunity then," said the general, who had now joined them, "will soon offer. Mrs. Clarenville has expressed the same wish, and I have ordered the carriage; but lady Neville will remain with pleasure until you and Elinor are ready to accompany her home."

"I am perfectly willing to return immediately," said Elinor, "if I can see major Mortimer first to inform him of my departure."

"I will

"I will see him for you," returned the general; "he is not far off; I observed him a short time since conversing with two ladies."

"I shall not have occasion to trouble you, my dear sir," replied Elinor, "as he is now coming this way."

Mortimer approaching, she informed him of her sister's desire to return home; and as Mrs. Clarenville was also going, she did not wish to detain lady Neville merely on her account.

Mortimer appeared willingly to accept her excuses; lady Neville invited him to accompany her party home to supper, but he apologized for not being able to avail himself of this kind offer; and entreating Elinor to allow him to see her early in the morning, assisted her into the carriage, and again returned to the ball-room.

"Well, Caroline," said lady Neville, "have you had a pleasant evening? and did the ball answer your expectations?"

"Oh yes," she replied; "for the first half-hour it exceeded every idea I had formed; but after that time I began to feel a little tired; the two dances I have been down this evening have fatigued me more than half-a-dozen such would have done at Rosebrook."

"Perhaps," returned her ladyship, "your partner was not so pleasant as those you have been accustomed to dance with."

"I have no fault to find with Mr. Egerton; he exerted himself most wonderfully, and really was quite agreeable. Perhaps you will think me very vain in remarking it, but I must own some of the gentlemen stared at me so terribly, and spoke their sentiments so very loud, that I caught myself blushing almost as frequently as Elinor."

Lady Neville smiled, and addressing the latter, said—"I thought I had understood from you, my dear, that lady Harriet Fitzmorton was to figure away as

bride to-night; I do not think she would have disliked the attention Caroline complains of. What could detain her from the ball?"

"Oh, thereby hangs a tale," returned Caroline; "I inquired of Mr. George Fitzmorton the cause of her absence, as I really had some curiosity to see her and her echo, Miss Marsden, when he gave me a most ludicrous account of the tragedy occasioned by the non-arrival of a beautiful dress, expressly ordered from town for this evening's appearance; and her ladyship had really and truly rendered herself unfit to be seen by the tears she had shed, and which ended in a fit of the sullens, because Mr. Fitzmorton endeavoured to persuade her she might wear one of the many elegant dresses she had by her. Miss Marsden, of course, did not choose to leave her dear, sweet lady Harriet, who, she declared, bore the disappointment much better than any one else would have done; and your friend

friend George," she continued, turning to Elinor, "protested he almost felt inclined to pity his *bane* to-night, as even she would find it a difficult task to keep her sweet friend in any tolerable temper. But, my dear lady Neville, I was on the point of asking you, when this ridiculous history put it out of my mind, if you were not very much surprised at seeing Mortimer this evening; and did you, oh! did you remark his black-eyed female friend?"

"I did," said the general; "she is a very handsome woman! What is her name, my dear Elinor?"

"I really do not know; major Mortimer did not introduce her to me."

"Indeed!" returned the general; "that is very strange! Her companion is a woman of rank, I understand; and they are both lately returned from India, where we may conclude Mortimer became acquainted with them; I expected you would have been able to give me some

some account of these ladies, as I overheard Mortimer's black-eyed friend, as Caroline calls her, inquire of a lady near me, which of you was Miss Belvington?"

"And was she able, my dear sir," cried Caroline, "to gratify the curiosity of this supposed East-Indian?"

"Yes," returned the general, smiling; "the Miss Belvingtons' names were pretty well known this evening, those who bore them not having passed unobserved."

"Then, depend upon it, Elinor," cried Caroline, "this East-Indian is an unsuccessful rival of yours, and that accounts for the flaming flash she treated you with when you apologized to her; and I remarked, after you had passed her, she continued to regard you with the same tremendous look. How different her countenance was then to the fascinating expression I saw it assume as she spoke to, and smiled on, a gentleman who addressed her! You cannot conceive

ceive how extremely beautiful that smile was; for I am unable to describe the effect it produced."

"Are you quite sure, Caroline," said the general, "that you are only sixteen next birthday?"

"I can only give you my mother's word for the truth of it," she laughingly replied; "and Rosebrook church register affirms the same."

The carriage had now reached Mr. Belvington's lodgings; Mr. Egerton was again ready to assist Caroline from it, and the rest of the party proceeded then to theirs.

General Clarenville inquired of the servant whether his son was returned, and heard in reply he had been home nearly an hour, and had immediately retired to his room.

Elinor, as soon as possible, took leave of her friends for the night, and repaired to her own apartment. Her reflections were not of the most pleasant nature.

Mortimer

Mortimer was returned, and already claimed the fulfilment of her fatal promise! But a little respite was yet hers; he must leave her again, and she hoped, in the course of a fortnight, to have acquired sufficient resolution to receive him as she ought. While her thoughts were thus employed, her sister's were wholly engrossed by the idea of the East-Indian, whose image she could not drive from her recollection, and she determined upon mentioning her, and the look she had given Elinor, to her friend lady Egerton on the morrow.

CHAPTER XI.

MORTIMER joined lady Neville's party at the breakfast-table the following morning. Not seeing Clarenville with them, he inquired what had become of him?

"His

"His servant informs me," replied the general, "my son is gone to take his breakfast with a friend he met last night at the ball."

When the tea equipage was removed Mortimer requested Elinor to take a stroll with him; and as she left the room to prepare for her walk, he remarked to lady Neville how very pale she looked after her evening's amusement. "I hope," he continued, in a tone of great anxiety —"I trust she is not ill."

"Do not be alarmed," replied her ladyship; "a little quiet will soon restore her bloom, which, forgive me for adding, your sudden appearance last night may have contributed to lessen."

"It may be so," he returned; "I trust it is nothing else—for I could not bear," he continued, after a pause—"I could not endure to lose her now."

"What terrible ideas are you tormenting yourself with, Mortimer?" said lady Neville, laughing. "I suppose you will

next

next imagine she is in a gallopping consumption. Come, let me hear no more of these fancies; take her out with you, and before you arrive at the end of the street, her bloom will be as fine as ever."

Elinor now again entered; and general Clarenville, as she passed and wished him good morning, was struck with the deathlike paleness of her countenance, and his apprehensions for her health now more than equalled Mortimer's, whom he entreated not to take her far, as she appeared so much fatigued.

Elinor and her companion had scarcely left the room when Clarenville entered it. The agitation of his countenance, and the tremor of his voice, as he paid his morning compliments, not a little alarmed his friends; he perceived it, and exerting himself to appear more composed, begged his aunt to give him some breakfast, having, by his laziness, lost the one he had been invited to partake of.

Lady Neville rang the bell for that purpose,

purpose, and then said—"I suppose you know we have had a visitor with us this morning; for I think you must have met him and Elinor as you came in. Did you think the latter looked ill? your father and Mortimer are uneasy on her account; I cannot say I observed it."

"I did not particularly remark her," replied Clarenville, in a thick and almost-inarticulate voice, as he hastily rose and walked to a window, which he threw open, and exclaimed—"How very warm your room feels!"

"It is a very warm morning," said lady Neville, "and I thank you for opening that sash."

"I am almost afraid Elinor will find the walk too much for her," said Mrs. Clarenville, anxiously: "are the streets very hot, Alfred?"

"Miss Belvington will not find them so," replied Clarenville, in rather a bitter tone, and turning from the window as he spoke, when perceiving his father's

ey

eyes fixed with a mournful tenderness upon him, he again hastened towards it, and pulling down the sash, exclaimed—"How very chill the air blows this morning!"

"You certainly cannot be well, Alfred," said his mother, in a voice of alarm, "if your feelings change so suddenly."

"I never felt better, my dear mother," he replied, in a tone of affected gaiety; and the servant then entering with his breakfast, he smiling added—"You will be convinced of the truth of this assertion when you see with what avidity I shall dispatch these rolls;" and he began hastily swallowing his breakfast, whilst lady Neville inquired of the general what amusement there would be to take her young friends to that evening?

"That inquiry, my dear aunt," said Clarenville, "brings to my recollection an invitation Mrs. Delmore has this morning charged

charged me with; it is for your party to join several of her other friends this evening in her garden, the terrace of which overhangs the sea, and is also close to the ship-yard, from which a noble vessel is to be launched this evening; and you will have an excellent view of it, if you are inclined to accept her offer."

"There is no sight I should so much wish to be a spectator of," said Mrs. Clarenville.

"Then let us, by all means, avail ourselves of this opportunity," returned lady Neville; "I can answer for our young friends' approval of the plan, and therefore shall be obliged to you, my dear Alfred, to inform Mrs. Delmore we shall, with pleasure, accept her kind invitation. You dine with us to-day?" she continued, seeing him rising to depart, "as I also expect major Mortimer will do."

The colour rose to Clarenville's cheek as he answered—"I have unfortunately

engaged

engaged myself to some friends, with whom I am going in a boat to be present at the launch."

"Your friends are always taking you from us now, Alfred," said his mother; "I have scarcely seen you since our arrival here; when will they be induced to spare you to me again?"

"Never, my dear mother, whilst they remain at S——, where they know not how better to amuse themselves; and as I can see nothing of you during our continuance here, and dislike very much this constant dissipation, I intend running away from S——, and preceding you a few days at my brother Ormsby's. I shall set off early to-morrow morning for Elmsly Park; therefore, my dear mother, if you make me the bearer of any letters or packets, have the goodness to prepare them for me in the course of the day. And now I will go and deliver my aunt's message to Mrs. Delmore;" and snatching

ing up his hat, Clarenville hurried from the room.

"Now then I shall lose both my children," said Mrs. Clarenville, as with tearful eyes she looked towards the general.

"It is better, my love," he replied, "that Alfred should leave us for the present; if he remain here much longer, his peace of mind will be totally destroyed."

"Gracious Heaven! what can you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Clarenville, turning pale with alarm; "what has my Alfred done?"

"Nothing that we can either blame or feel surprised at," replied the general, with a mournful smile, "however we may regret it. We cannot wonder at his having yielded up his heart to our favourite Elinor, when we consider how much he has been thrown into her society, though we may grieve it is not in her power to return his attachment."

"I do indeed most truly pity my poor Alfred, if such is the case," return-

ed

ed his mother, " and will no longer be selfish enough to wish him to continue here another day; but it is very unfortunate our dear Elinor should not be at liberty to return his affection; had she not been previously acquainted with Mortimer, she could not have been insensible to the merits of our beloved son."

" Heaven grant such may not be the case now!" exclaimed lady Neville; when perceiving the sudden start of her companions, she half-smiling continued —" Do not, my good friends, question me farther on this subject; that ejaculation involuntarily escaped me; I ought not even to have hinted at what was only accidentally overheard. Thus much I owe to the delicacy of poor Elinor—she was perfectly unconscious of what she uttered."

The entrance of lady Egerton now changed the conversation, which was not resumed, as she remained with them

till Mortimer again entered the room, though unaccompanied by Elinor, whom, he informed her friends, had gone on to her own apartment.

Lady Egerton, as she looked at him, fancied he appeared not a little disturbed; and her heart now admitted a hope that Elinor had entered into some explanation with him, which, though unpleasant at the time, would, in the end, more effectually secure the happiness of both; and anxious to have this pleasing hope converted into a certainty, she gave a message from Mrs. Belvington, as an excuse for seeking her beloved god-daughter, and proceeded to her apartment.

Elinor was sitting on the side of her bed, her head resting against the post, and so totally absorbed in thought, she neither heard nor saw the entrance of lady Egerton, who, having advanced several paces into the room, and perceiving Elinor continued immoveable, now anxiously inquired if she were ill?

Elinor

Elinor started at the sound of her voice, and immediately advancing towards her, attempted to smile as she assured her she was quite well; but the effort was too much for her, and in another moment she burst into tears.

Lady Egerton now felt almost certain her hopes were well founded, and affectionately kissing her beloved Elinor, as she led her to a seat, and placed herself beside her, inquired whether it was any conversation that had passed during her walk which had thus agitated her?

Elinor, for a few moments, was unable to reply; but making a strong effort to recover herself, she at length found voice to say—"I own, my dear lady Egerton, I have been very much distressed by Mortimer's incomprehensible behaviour this morning, and am totally at a loss to understand what could induce him to make the strange request he so earnestly urged me to comply with."

"If you are at liberty to repeat what has passed between you," said lady Egerton, "perhaps I may be enabled to find a clue to unravel the mystery."

"I do not think that possible, my dear madam," returned Elinor, "but you shall be acquainted with all, and then you can form your own opinion.

"The first thing that led to the conversation was our visit to S——, and Mortimer inquired who first proposed it? I was surprised at this question, as in my last letter I had given him the whole account of it, which I now repeated again; it struck me he did not appear to attend to the recital, and as soon as I had concluded, he suddenly exclaimed—'How unfortunate it was, your having left Willowfield before my arrival!' A little surprised, I inquired what difference it could possibly make to him our meeting there, or at S——? and his answer was," continued Elinor, blushing—'He might then, perhaps, by his persuasions, have

induced

induced me to return with him to town as his wife."

"Return to town with him!" repeated lady Egerton; "how could such an idea ever enter his imagination?"

"I know not," returned Elinor; "and when I made the same inquiry, he only anwered—'Would to God I had never seen S——!' And in the next moment my surprise amounted to amazement, as he entreated me to allow of his procuring a special licence, and consent to become his wife before he left this place. Can you, my dear madam, form an idea of the motive that could influence him to make so extraordinary a request?"

"I cannot indeed," replied her astonished friend. "What was the reason he assigned?"

"He gave me none," returned Elinor; "and the only answer he constantly made to my repeated requests for an explanation was—'You know not how much my happiness depends upon your compliance."

"And how have you at length settled this affair?"

"By a renewed promise on my part," said the now deeply-blushing Elinor, "of becoming his wife before the conclusion of the summer."

"And had he the grace to express any gratitude for this promise?"

"Yes, when he found it impossible to shake my resolution of not complying with his first request, which the more I endeavour to understand, the greater is my perplexity."

Lady Egerton was silent a moment, and then said—"I must once more revolve your little history in my own mind before I venture to give you my opinion. But now, pray tell me, did he mention the East-Indian lady to you, whom Caroline tells me you saw last night at the ball, and with whom he appeared so intimately acquainted?"

"He merely told me her name was Alresford, and that he had known her in

India

India; but so quickly turned the conversation again to the subject we had been before discussing, and his agitation was so great as he once more urged me to consent to his extraordinary proposal, that in endeavouring to convince him of its impropriety, and calm his perturbation, I forgot to mention his friend's strange conduct towards me."

Caroline now entering to invite Elinor to accompany her in a walk, prevented her saying more; but she entreated her sister to excuse her, as she felt much fatigued by the one she was just returned from; and lady Egerton observing how agitated she still looked, hastened Caroline away, and advised Elinor to rest herself a little, and endeavour to shake off her fatigue, that she might be able to accompany the party in the evening to Mrs. Delmore's.

When Caroline returned from her walk, she again stepped into lady Neville's lodgings, and ran up to her sister's

room,

room, to inquire if she had recovered her fatigue. Elinor, having answered in the affirmative, asked in return where she had been walking, and who she had met in her ramble?

"Oh, hundreds of persons," replied Caroline, "whose faces I never saw before; and very droll-looking animals some of them were, as even Mr. Egerton allowed. But my attention has been almost entirely engaged in watching and admiring your black-eyed Indian beauty. We met her with her companion, whose name, I am informed, is lady Tankerville, and her friend's is——"

"Alresford," interrupted Elinor.

"Oh, then, Mortimer has been beforehand with me," returned Caroline; "and who or what is she?"

"I know nothing farther concerning her than that she was acquainted with major Mortimer in India; have you any information to give me on the subject?"

"Not much; Mr. Egerton has not as

yet

yet been able to discover more of her than that she arrived last week with her friend, who, report says, is the widow of a nabob. They lodge in the same hotel with Mrs. Montague, and have every thing in the most dashing style—are very reserved in their manners, and know scarcely any one. Every morning since they have been here, until to-day, has been spent by them in driving out round the country, and have seldom returned till very late in the evening from these excursions."

"And how came Mr. Egerton to know all this?" inquired Elinor; "I heard him say he was not acquainted with Mr. Montague; where then could he possibly get all this information?"

"My curiosity, dear Elinor, is not quite so powerful as yours appears to be, therefore I never thought of asking him, being perfectly satisfied he was able to gratify my earnest wish of knowing a little more of them than I did last night."

"But

"But I was going to tell you, we passed them just as lady Egerton and myself left the house. I recognised the bright black eyes, though partly concealed behind a veil; and they were fixed with as much earnestness upon me this morning as they were upon you last night.

"Lady Egerton was as much struck with their haughty expression as we had been, and when we had passed, inquired of me if this were not the lady I had been describing this morning at breakfast, as her appearance so exactly answered to mine and her nephew's account of the *incognita?*

"Upon my answering in the affirmative, we both involuntarily turned to take another peep at her, and were much surprised to see her and her companion earnestly regarding the windows of lady Neville's lodgings. Mortimer now came from the house; lady Tankerville appeared inclined to cross the street and

address

address him; but Miss Alresford, evidently agitated, prevented her, and taking her arm, hurried from the spot. We now continued our walk, dying with curiosity to know more about these strangers, when we fortunately met Mr. Egerton, who gave us the information I before detailed to you. And here ends my budget; does it not contain inexplicable matter?"

"I can see nothing in it so very mysterious, my dear Caroline, as your sagacious looks tell me you think there is. What have you told me? Merely the names of two ladies, whom major Mortimer has before informed me he knew in India, and who, I suspect, from his not introducing to us, he does not much admire. They are most probably angry with him on this account, and we are also included in their displeasure. Whatever else you fancy they have to do with us and our lodgings must, I think, be mere imagination."

"You

"You are, Elinor, as my father said this morning at breakfast, a very good and a very sensible young woman; but I must take the liberty of lengthening this speech by observing, you are, in ma-ny respects, too apt to be incredulous. And now, good morning to you; we shall all, except sister Coleridge, acco pany you to the launch, and bid adie to Clarenville, who, I suppose yo know, sets off to-morrow for Elmsl Park. Good-bye!" And with a sign cant nod Caroline left the room.

END OF VOL. II.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.